

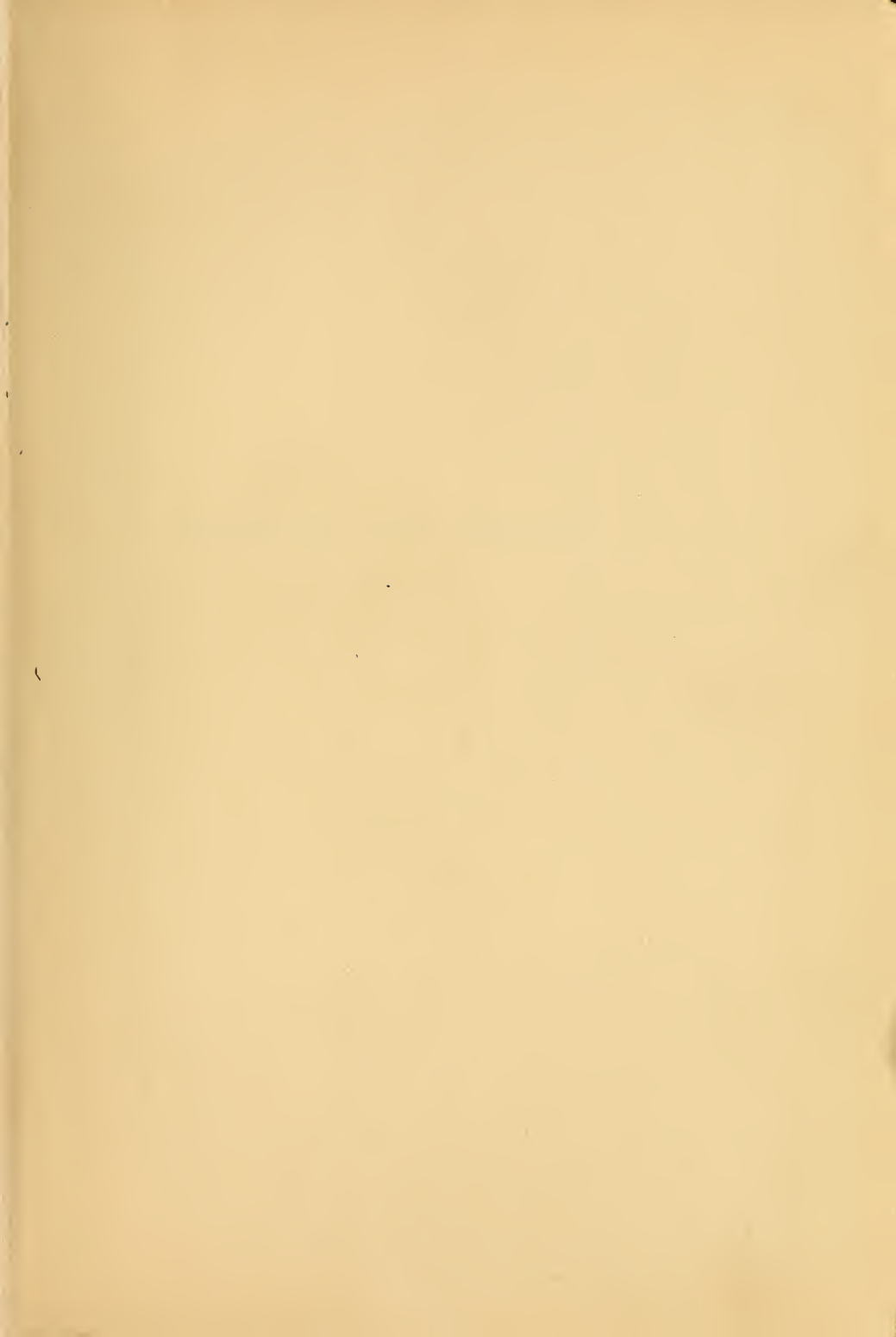


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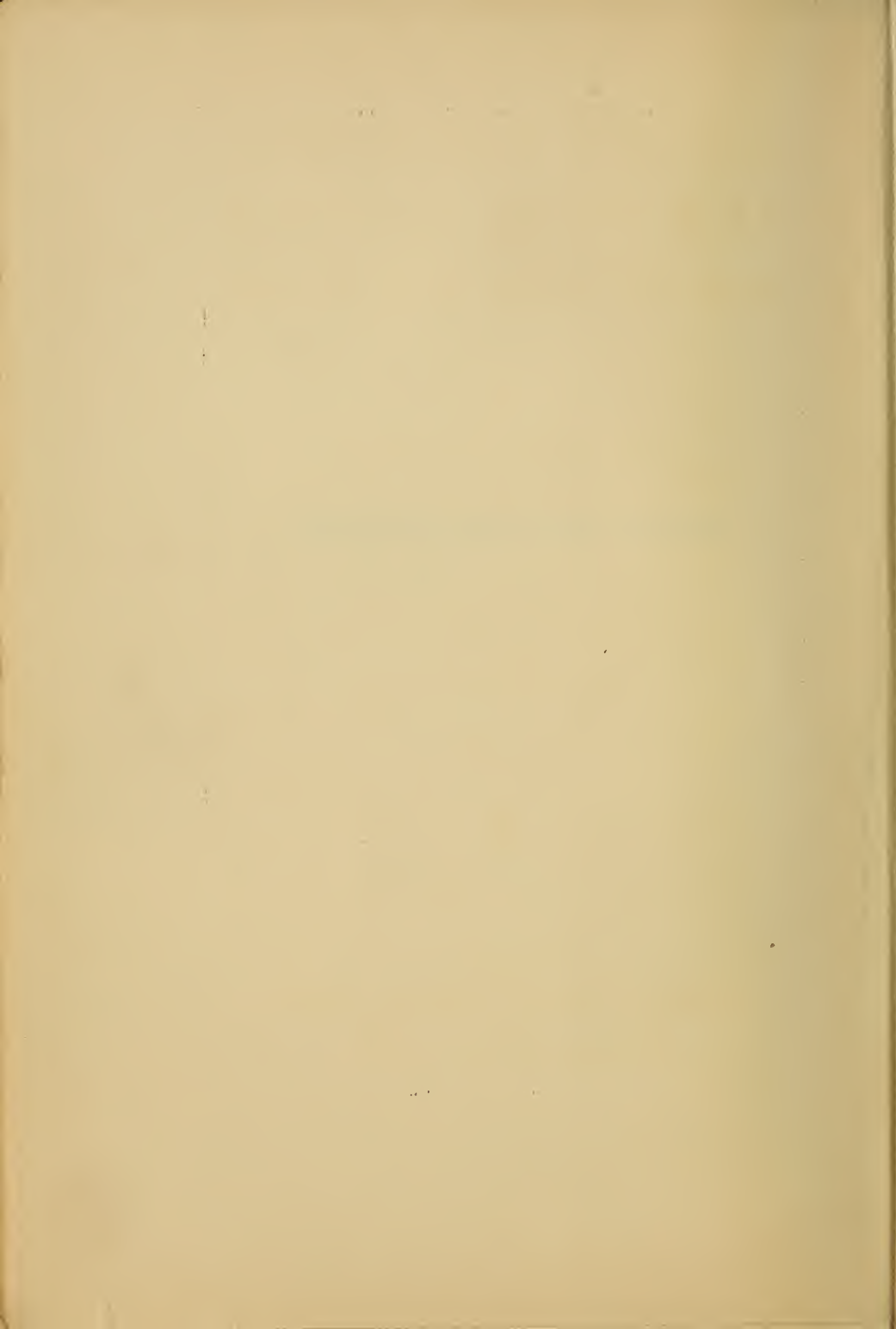
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ADVENT AND OTHER SERMONS



ADVENT, CHRISTMAS NEW YEAR, EASTER and OTHER SERMONS

By

ROBERT STUART MACARTHUR

Minister of Calvary Baptist Church, New York
since May, 1870

*O time by holy prophets long foretold,
Time waited for by saints in days of old,
O sweet, auspicious morn
When Christ the Lord was born !*

—PHŒBE CARY



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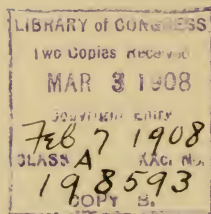
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PREFACE

THE sermons comprising this volume were, for the most part, preached on consecutive Sunday mornings or evenings. Those on the "Wells of the Bible" were preached during the summer; the others, with the exception of the "Anniversary Sermon," were preached quite recently in the regular order of the author's ministry. The sermon commemorating the thirty-fifth anniversary of the pastorate, although somewhat out of date as compared with the other sermons, is given because of the intrinsic interest in the facts it gives concerning the kingdom of God. In their publication it has been thought best to retain the style of pulpit address.

The author sincerely hopes that these sermons may help all readers to make due preparation for the Second Advent of Christ, whose first Advent the earlier sermons in the volume are intended to honor.

ROBERT STUART MACARTHUR.

CALVARY STUDY, NEW YORK,
February, 1907.

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ADVENT AND OTHER SERMONS

I

PREPARING FOR ADVENT

Text: The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain.—Isa. 40 : 3, 4.

THOSE who observe what is known as the ecclesiastical year speak of to-day as the first Sunday in Advent. In the Greek Church the period of Advent comprises forty days, as does the period of Lent; but in the Roman Church, the Lutheran Church, and other churches which observe the period of Advent, it covers only four weeks. The period of Advent was not generally adopted as a church festival until the sixth century. The idea then grew up in the church that each year ought in some measure to repeat the leading events in the life of our Lord. That is the fundamental idea in what is called the Christian year; and the period of Advent was set apart as a season of preparation for Christ's

literal coming. It is true also that one other purpose in observing this season with Christian services was to weaken the effect of the gross and sensual festivals that were observed among the heathen at this season. To keep the Christians from contamination by these heathen festivals a Christian festival was organized for the same period of the year. This remark applies emphatically to the Christmas and the Easter festivals.

FREEDOM OF ACTION.

If any ecclesiastical authority commanded us to observe this period, we might resist the command. If any ecclesiastical authority forbade us to observe this period, again we might be disposed to resist that authority. In our church, most fortunately, we have large liberty in the choice of subjects and in the time and manner of their discussion. In the exercise of that liberty of choice I propose this morning to begin a series of "Advent Sermons" which will continue until the Sunday nearest Christmas. There are two good reasons why this liberty should thus be exercised. The first reason is that there is always a gain in presenting religious truth when that truth is in the very atmosphere of the time. He would be a very unwise man who should neglect the Eastertide, and should choose the month of July for a series of sermons on the Resurrection; but he is greatly wise who preaches on that topic when the thoughts of the people are filled with the general

subject. The other reason is that by a modified observance of the ecclesiastical year there will be greater symmetry in the subjects presented in the pulpits. There is always a tendency for preachers to discuss with great emphasis and frequency their own favorite topics; thus some men preach almost exclusively on a few themes, and other preachers on other but equally few topics. Some pastors seldom speak in public without saying much about the second coming of Christ. These men would be more useful if they realized that truth is a circle, and not a segment. The Bible is shorn of much of its power when that fact is forgotten, and when men deal largely only in segments, rather than in circles of truth. We always strive to present in this pulpit, with some degree of symmetry, the truths of the Christian system, as these truths are presented in the Christian Scriptures.

In harmony with this thought and purpose the text for this morning is chosen. Next Sunday morning I shall speak on 'Prophecy and the Advent'; the Sunday morning following that I shall speak of "History and the Advent"; and the Sunday following that will be a discussion of the actual birth of our Lord in Bethlehem.

COMFORT FOR THE AFFLICTED.

Even the cursory reader of the prophecy of Isaiah must clearly see that the general design of the fortieth chapter, and of the entire section beginning

with this chapter and going to the end of the book, is to comfort the afflicted people of God in their exile. The writer thinks of them as still in Babylon, but he also conceives of them as near the end of their long and painful banishment. When his thought sweeps back to Jerusalem he discovers that the temple is in ruins, the city is destroyed, and the whole land is in a state of waste and desolation. But there is hope also in this prophetic outlook; for the long captivity is seen to be near its end, and the exiled people are soon to be restored to the land they love. The prophet, however, under the influence of a divine inspiration, speaks comfortably to Jerusalem; her sins are forgiven, her punishment is completed, and she shall receive double for all her sins. Thus the note of joy is struck, a note whose strains, echoing over the desert, shall bring cheer to the captives in distant Babylon.

PREPARATION INDICATED.

I want you, in the first place, to catch the thought of this preparation as that thought is illustrated in the journey of kings and other distinguished personages. The great deliverance here promised has several meanings; of these I shall speak more fully a little later. The image which represents all of them is taken from the march of earthly conquerors and regal personages. The royal cavalcade is about to start on its journey; the horses are harnessed and mounted. In the wilderness now are

heard the echoes of the herald's cry, proclaiming that every obstacle is to be removed, so that the royal procession may march without interruption and without inconvenience. Proclamations of Eastern monarchs make us quite familiar with this method of procedure. When they went on a journey, and especially through an inhospitable country, and over trackless deserts and mountains, they sent out their harbingers, their forerunners, their heralds, demanding that preparation be made for the advent of the king. In such circumstances this proclamation was an absolute necessity. In doing this it was often necessary to find fording-places over the streams, or to construct bridges; it was necessary to level the high hills or to find a road around them; it was necessary also to fill up the valleys or over them to construct causeways. It was needful thus to open a way through the howling wilderness and over the trackless deserts.

Roads in the modern sense of that term, were unknown in those days; indeed, roads in many countries are almost unknown in our day. Roads are among the best evidences of civilization. There are many countries to-day in which there are no roads worth describing. Roads are prophets of civilization; roads are evangelists of progress. No roads, no education; no education, no roads—the two always go together, whether in European, Asian, or South American countries. The Romans were the great builders of roads, and the Romans in the

days of Isaiah had not begun their work. Later they girdled the civilized world with roads. You will find their roads to-day in England and in Scotland, and still in good condition, these superb roads built by the Romans, the greatest road-makers the world has ever known. The Roman empire has passed away, but the Roman roads abide. They were more enduring than the thrones of the Roman emperors. The man who builds a good road is a great benefactor to any county, State, or nation. Railways are civilizers.

All these statements find abundant illustration in the case of Semiramis, the legendary queen of Assyria, who founded Babylon and built the city with magnificence and splendor, with its walls, gates, palaces, and temples. She conquered Persia, Egypt, Libya, and Ethiopia, and invaded India. She made a triumphal progress into Media and Persia and Armenia. In the account of this journey, we are told that in her march to Ecbatana she came to the Zarcean mountains, which were full of precipices and hollows. She could not make the journey without taking a great circle around the mountains. Being desirous of leaving an enduring memorial of herself, as well as of shortening the distance, she ordered the hills to be lowered and the hollows to be filled. She thus made the road shorter and the journey more expeditious; the road thus constructed is still called the road of Queen Semiramis. We are also told that this was her common practice in all

the countries to which she went. Her story is evidently an epitome of Assyrian history attached to the names of Ninus and Semiramis. Her name means a "mountain-dove"; she is said to have been changed into a dove and finally to have become a deity. Something of her ambition for road-making was shown by Napoleon when he made his historic march into Italy. He then cleft a passage through the mountains, accomplishing one of the greatest engineering achievements of modern times. The road was constructed from 1800 to 1806, under Napoleon's orders. It is forty-two miles long and is carried across six hundred and eleven bridges. You will readily see the relation of his great enterprise to the case in hand.

Babylon was separated from Judea by an immense tract of country, and much of the journey was through the country known as Arabia Deserta. This was a continuous desert. It is mentioned in history as a very remarkable thing that Nebuchadnezzar, having heard of the death of his father, and being desirous of going from Egypt to Babylon, went through this very desert. This was the most direct way for the Jews to return from Babylon. We do not know what road they took, although it is not at all unlikely that they passed through this very wilderness.

The first application of the language here employed is to the return of the Jews from Babylon to their own land. The prophet hears the herald

making proclamation. The redemption of God's people was clearly foretold; it is now about to be accomplished. Jehovah was to march through the desert at the head of his people. He is to make as triumphal a progress now as he accomplished when he marched at the head of Israel when they returned from their Egyptian bondage.

But the thought goes deeper far. There is to be a more glorious march of the great God; he is to come as a babe in Bethlehem's manger; he is to appear in human form. He has sent out his heralds commanding men throughout the world to prepare the way for the approach of the heavenly King. We are more than warranted in making this application of these ancient words, by the words of John the Baptist (Matt. 3 : 1-12), read to you as the second lesson of this morning. He was the chosen herald of the great King; he was the celestially appointed harbinger. He went through the wilderness saying, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord; make his paths straight."

PRESENT PREPARATION NEEDED.

But I make a third and more personal application of these words, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord"; construct ye a highway for this new-born King into your hearts, into your homes, into your church. The whole world, in a very real sense, in all movements of civilization, is a preparation for the coming of the new-born King. All the highways of commerce,

properly considered, are paths for Jesus as King. Every steamship and every railway is a highway for Jesus Christ. We miss the meaning of modern progress unless we have this conception clearly in mind. Think for a moment of the highways for Christ in India to-day because of the construction of railways in that land. When the early missionaries went there railways were unknown; journeys were long, slow, and difficult. Men construct railways to gratify their personal ambition and to add to their personal emolument; then the great God stretches forth his arm and puts his hand on that railway and thus consecrates it to a higher civilization and makes it literally a highway for the messengers of the glorious gospel of the blessed God. Men construct steamships in order to advance the interests of commerce; they put the flags of different nations at the masts of these steamers, but the eye of faith can see the banner of Immanuel above the flag of Britain and the flag of America, as these steamships circumnavigate the globe. He is not a far-seeing philosopher who is not a Christian statesman and patriot; he is devoid of true vision who does not discover that all the triumphs of modern civilization are triumphs of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We have talked much of "Darkest Africa," but the children in our Sunday-schools to-day will not reach middle life before the phrase "Darkest Africa" will have disappeared from the vocabulary

of every nation in the world. If ever there was a movement in the interest of the kingdom of God, it is the "Cape-to-Cairo Railway." That railway will banish the present darkness forever. Along that track will come the messengers of the gospel and all Africa shall be illumined with the light of him who has proclaimed himself to be the Light of the World.

The moment railways went into Salt Lake City, Mormonism was doomed. Mormonism struggled on for a time; unfortunately it is in existence still. Brigham Young believed when he went to that valley that he had gone outside of civilization—had gone beyond the reach of the laws of the United States. Civilization followed him; railways were erected, and the first railway that blew its whistle, awaking the echoes in Salt Lake Valley, sounded forth the doom of Mormonism. All the discoveries of modern life are the harbingers of Jesus Christ. All the more humane applications of law are in the interest of the gospel. All reforms along the line of alleviating sorrow, humanizing punishment, and lessening suffering are in harmony with the gospel of Christ. These are all preparatory paths for the great King. Indeed, the great King has gone before the railways; he has made them possible. He is the author of modern civilization. Jesus Christ ought to be crowned as King in the markets of the world; indeed, even now, wherever his name goes, there law, equity, and righteousness, to some degree, pre-

vail. Not only through the gates of the olden prophecies was the King to come, but through the triumphal arches of modern progress shall the Messiah march. This thought fills me with unspeakable joy, with boundless enthusiasm, and with holy aspiration. I thus see the august presence of the Son of God on every steamship, on every railway, and in every business achievement around the globe.

If we reflect we shall discover that telegraphs, and especially wireless telegraphy, are making the whole world a whispering gallery; if we listen we shall hear the name that is above every name, the name that is the sweetest music that ever fell upon human ear—the name of Jesus Christ, echoing throughout the world! The whole world is illumined with his light, and is vocal with his praise. Thus it comes to pass that as students of politics, national and international, we ought to bring all our studies of all the nations of the earth into the service of Jesus Christ. We ought to build our studio on Calvary and, in the light that radiates from the cross, study the great movements now in progress in Europe, Asia, Africa, and America, and among all the nations of the earth.

PERSONAL PREPARATION.

Will you come a little closer home? I ask that we make a still more personal preparation for the coming of the King. We are to fill up the valleys of unbelief, of doubt, in order that the King may

pass over into our hearts. I do not believe that this is peculiarly a skeptical age; it is an inquisitive age. It is skeptical in the primary meaning of the word skeptical, and not in its secondary and less favorable meaning. The primary meaning of skeptic is thoughtful, reflective, inquiring. It comes from the Greek word *skeptomai* to look carefully, to examine critically. Unfortunately the word has now an undesirable meaning. It often correctly describes a man who does not carefully study, does not wisely think, but who doubts before he has considerably examined the subject on which he pronounces an oracular opinion. I urge you to-day to believe your beliefs and to doubt your doubts. Do you catch my thought? Young men and women, and older men and women often reverse this order; they doubt their beliefs, and believe their doubts. That is a supremely silly method of reasoning. Those who so act do not deserve the name of thinker; they are intellectually foolish; they are sciolists and not scientists. Think of the folly of believing our doubts and doubting our beliefs! Let me exhort you to reverse that order and again urge you to believe your beliefs and to doubt your doubts. No preacher ought to preach the things that he does not know; so preaching, some preachers would have a very long creed. There are things enough that you do not know and believe yourselves. The business of the pulpit is not to create doubt, but to declare truth. Fill up the valleys of doubt by the

granite rocks of faith. Better have a short creed and believe every bit of it than have a creed twice as long and believe only half of it. One reason why I oppose the long creeds is because they are incitations to doubt on many points. Hold on firmly to a few great beliefs. Believe in God; believe in his Son, Jesus Christ. You may have doubts as to how he came into humanity. Do not attach undue importance to your doubts so long as you believe in Christ as your personal Saviour. He was in humanity. You may have various theories of the incarnation; firmly hold the great fact. Christ was incarnated. You may doubt whether or not he was truly divine and also and truly human. Never mind the doubts so long as you truly follow him; following, loving, obeying him, your doubts will soon and forever vanish. He was the Ideal Man. Follow him. He will assuredly lead you out into a large place of faith, peace, and love.

I met a man the other day who was full of doubt. He said, "I do not know whether Jesus was divine or not." I said, "I shall not now discuss the question with you. I shall not argue with you at this stage in your religious history. Are you willing to admit that Jesus was the most perfect being that ever walked this earth? Are you willing to-day to take Jesus Christ as the model, as the ideal of your life? Are you willing to follow him as your Guide, Saviour, and Lord?" These questions brought him to a point where he stopped. He was not willing to

follow Christ; he was willing to argue at any length regarding Christ's personality, but he was not willing to follow Christ as Lord and Master. I said, "I shall not talk longer to you. What is the use of giving you more light when you will not walk in the light you have?" This man would not take Christ as the model of his life; he would not walk in the light he had. I said further to him, "Go down on your knees here and now and submit to Jesus Christ as the ideal of your life." This he refused to do. O submit now to Jesus Christ! O do here and now give him your heart! Then, I assure you, your difficulties will vanish. They will all be scattered like the mists of the morning, when the sun rises with light, and glory, and healing in its beams. He that doeth the will of God shall know the doctrine of God. This is the statement of a philosophical principle; this is the formulation of a universal law. Fill up the valleys of unbelief. Let Jesus into your hearts and lives this morning. Admitting him you soon shall walk in the light of his countenance and in the joy of his conscious peace and love.

REMOVING OBSTACLES.

The best way to fill up the valleys is to level down the hills. In building railways, men always take, when that course is possible, the earth from the hills and dump it into the valleys. They thus accomplish a twofold purpose. The pathway to some of your

hearts is covered with hills of pride. Pride is one of the most subtle of all the temptations of the devil. Men can be proud that they are not proud. They can be swelled out with pride, while they are declaring to you their humility. You remember that Diogenes sneered at Plato's abundant feast; he came dressed in rags and eating the plainest food and said, "Thus I trample on the pride of Plato." Plato turned and said, "Yes, but with greater pride in Diogenes." He was prouder of his rags than Plato was of his decent clothes. So to-day men are deceived; they are proud that they are not proud. They are exalted because of their humility. They are just like the Pharisee, who strutted about, thanking God that he was not as other men. So there are men to-day saying, "We are far better than church-members. We are a thousand times better than other men are." Oh, poor, inflated Pharisees! The Pharisee in our Lord's parable did not really pray at all; he simply delivered an oration to God. He virtually said, "See how good I am. See how often I fast. See what tithes I pay. I am not like other men, especially like that poor, wretched publican yonder." But the publican stood at a distance, beating his breast and saying, "God be merciful to me *the sinner.*" And Jesus said, "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." Your spiritual pride, young men and young

women, and older men and women, your self-righteousness—this is your condemnation. You are covered with the rags of your self-righteousness, and Jesus wants to tear from you with his pierced hand that wretched robe; he stands ready to cover you with the spotless robe of his righteousness.

I might speak also of the hills of inconsistency in Christians. These hills are keeping Jesus out of the church, and out of your home, and out of your hearts. O men and women, get into line with God. I want you to construct a highway for Jesus by prayer and zeal, by faith and love. I earnestly proclaim in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God."

II

THE ADVENT PROPHECY

Text: To him give all the prophets witness.—Acts 10 : 43.

MOST wonderful are the prophecies in the Bible concerning Jesus Christ. The Bible is a unit. One thought pervades it from Genesis to Revelation. One dominant purpose underlies prophecy and history, parable and poem. Although it took sixteen hundred years to write the Bible, and although perhaps forty human writers, representing all degrees of social life, intellectual culture, and spiritual attainment were employed in this sacred composition, still a complete unity marks the entire book. There is, indeed, a great difference between the Psalms of David and the Epistles of Paul; but it is the difference between the moon showing us a crescent of her disk and the moon in the fulness of her beauty; it is the difference between the gray dawn of the morning and the splendor of noonday. One thought pervades the Book as the diapason pervades, unifies, and dominates a great oratorio.

THE BIBLE A UNITY.

The unity of the Bible, considering the manner of its human origin, is one of its great wonders and

one of its divine beauties. If we deny its divine inspiration, it seems impossible to account for its historic and spiritual unity. The charm of this unity grows upon us the more we study the sacred records. This unity is internal rather than external, essential and not accidental, spiritual rather than merely literary.

It is delightful to note this unity in the harmony which marks considerable sections of the Bible. The first three chapters and the last three chapters of the Bible show a harmonious unity to a remarkable degree. Those who have never studied these six chapters with the thought of their harmony in mind, will be surprised and delighted at its discovery. In the first three chapters of Genesis we have the first heaven and the first earth ruined by the sin of man. In the last three chapters of Revelation we have an account of a new heaven and a new earth, the tabernacle of God being with men. In Genesis we had the victory of the tempter; in Revelation we have his utter overthrow and his eternal doom. In that first section in Genesis we had paradise lost; in this last section of Revelation we have paradise regained. In the first section of Genesis we had Adam with his new-found bride, and both of them tempted and fallen; in the last section of Revelation we have the second Adam with his holy and blessed bride, the church, forever safe and glorious. In the earlier section we have death and misery. In the later Scripture we have life and felicity.

In the beginning of the New Testament, as in the beginning of the Old Testament, we had the holy and blessed Emmanuel, God with us; and in Revelation, the crowning joy of the redeemed is their consciousness of God's presence, their rapturous realization of God once again as Emmanuel. This presence is the grand consummation, the glorious triumph, the blessed victory won by the "strong Son of God."

Let us now walk over the hilltops of Old Testament history, and in doing so we certainly shall see Jesus at every step as "the desire of all nations," whatever interpretation may be given to that phrase as used by the prophet Haggai. Going back to the gates of Eden we see Christ as the seed of the woman which shall bruise the head of the serpent. Between the posterity of the woman and wicked men there should be eternal enmity. This assurance of victory is a glorious promise. The warfare between these contending parties will continue until Christ and his people shall win a complete victory over the devil and his angels. It is true that the serpent would bruise the heel of man, but in order to do so he had to put his head under that heel. This is really the first gospel promise found in the Bible. Even with a partial understanding of its full import, this promise must have given unspeakable joy to Adam and Eve. Other promises speedily followed, but this one has the honor of being the first evangelical promise in the Bible.

Moving forward, we come to Christ as the seed of Abraham, in whom all the nations of the earth shall be blessed. The name Abram now becomes Abraham (Gen. 17 : 5), this latter form of the name meaning "father of a multitude." An everlasting covenant is now established between God and the descendants of Abraham in their generations; and the land of Canaan is given them for an everlasting possession.

THE EARLY VOICES.

We take another step and find Christ known as Shiloh; with this name is the promise that the scepter shall not depart from Judah, and that unto Christ shall the gathering of the people be. This seems to be a clear prediction of the Messiah, although there are various opinions regarding the origin and literal meaning of the word Shiloh. Perhaps the better interpretation of the word makes it signify the Tranquilizer, the Pacificator, the Giver of Peace. If this is the correct interpretation of the word Shiloh, it is a title preeminently applicable to the Messiah. At his birth the proclamation of "Peace on earth, good-will toward men," was made, and an important part of his mission was to restore peace between God and man. The Messiah was the dispenser of the blessings of grace, and the King of Peace; he thus presents a new aspect—that of peace-maker—whom eventually all the nations of the earth shall obey as the Prince of Peace.

In Numbers 24 : 17 we behold him as the Star out of Jacob, and a Scepter arising out of Israel. We know that these titles of the Messiah are a part of the mysterious prophecy of Balaam, the son of Beor. If the reference is to the Messiah, Balaam must have prophesied under a divine impulse; it would seem as if the previous parts of this discourse had contemplated the Messiah, though he was not expressly named. If this ancient prophecy is brought into parallelism with the gospel record of Christ's birth, we shall be struck with the harmony between the two. It cannot be forgotten that, in connection with our Lord's birth, a mysterious star guided the Magi from the East to the manger in Bethlehem where the Christ was born. This movement of the mysterious star was the going forth of the star as beheld in anticipative vision. In the East a star has always been regarded as a symbol of some great event. Probably Balaam used the word star metaphorically to designate some illustrious ruler. Although the star seen by the Magi appeared first in the Eastern world, this fact does not really contradict the phrase, "Star out of Jacob," because the Messiah, in his earthly humanity, came from the midst of the nation collectively known as Jacob. It is almost certain that the star of the Magi stands in close relation to the star of Balaam. This suggestion is supported where our Lord expressly speaks of himself as "the root and offspring of David, the bright and morning Star."

THE GROWING LIGHT.

The light grows brighter as we move forward ; the voices become plainer and the reading more legible. Now the Messiah is spoken of as the great prophet and lawgiver like unto Moses : " The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me ; unto him ye shall hearken " (Deut. 18 : 15).

This prophet was to be great above all the prophets ; by him God was to make himself known to men more fully than ever before. This prophet was really the divine Word, by whom the will of God was to be revealed. The points of similarity between the Messiah and Moses are very striking. Both were raised up out of the midst of their brethren. Both were the messengers of a new dispensation. If the details of their lives were compared, the similarity would be markedly apparent ; and the death of Moses immediately suggests the ascension of Christ.

The Messiah fulfils, in his life and work, this ancient prophecy regarding his likeness to Moses. Was Moses a prophet and lawgiver to Israel ? Vastly more so was the Messiah. Did Moses deliver the people out of Egypt ? Christ delivers his people from a still greater bondage. Was Moses the founder of a new dispensation ? Christ became the head of a new race. Was Moses faithful as a servant ? Christ was still more faithful as a Son.

Both were prophets, both were lawgivers, both were teachers, both were mediators, and the likeness between them is suggestively exact in general and in detail. This parallelism is not fanciful but accords with solid fact.

THE VOICE OF DAVID.

Five hundred years pass; again we listen to the voice of prophetic Scripture. Great changes have taken place in this little country of Palestine; it stands now in new relations to surrounding nations. Great David sits on his lofty throne, and he has united the tribes into one nation. This nation is harmonious at home and powerful abroad. In the midst of peace and prosperity, David is seated on his throne as the type of Him who is David's Son and David's Lord. David strikes his harp and it gives forth melodious music. The Messiah was the theme of his loftiest poetry. There can be no poetry, in the highest sense of that term, except it be religious. Our noblest hymns chant the name of Jesus Christ. Men who deny the divinity of Christ cannot write poetry which most profoundly touches the heart and most mightily exalts the soul. Atheism never wrote a great hymn; the life that is bounded by the horizon of this world can never rise to the loftiest heights of poetry and music. Faith alone writes immortal songs and sings in celestial strains. Hear the echoes of David's resonant harp in the Second and the Fortieth psalms:

I will tell of the decree:
Jehovah said unto me, Thou art my Son;
This day have I begotten thee.
Ask of me, and I will give thee the nations
for thine inheritance,
And the uttermost parts of the earth for thy
possession.

Then said I, Lo, I am come;
In the roll of the book it is written of me:
I delight to do thy will, O my God.

In the first of these quotations the Anointed One, or the Messiah, is introduced, proclaiming Jehovah's counsel concerning himself; a promise had been made to him that he should reign not by the will of man, but by the grace of God. There cannot be the slightest doubt that "I" here refers to the Messiah. The introduction of a new personality at this point in the psalm gives it marked dramatic interest. The quotation from the Fortieth psalm the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews directly applies to the Messiah. It is not easy to see how this could be applied to David, but most naturally and beautifully does it apply to the Messiah. He came to do the will of God by perfect obedience to the divine law, and he became obedient unto death in making an atonement for sin.

THE VOICE OF ISAIAH.

We take another step. A period of between two hundred and three hundred years has passed. We

now listen to the voice of Isaiah the evangelical prophet. It is a voice of mingled sweetness, mystery, and majesty; so majestic a voice has not hitherto been heard from the lips of any prophet regarding the advent of the Messiah. Isaiah sings loftily of him as the Child of hope, as the Comforter of his people, as the Redeemer of men, and as the Prince of Peace. Listen, not to my poor descriptions of Isaiah's glowing and glorious prophecies, but hear his own wonderful words:

"Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign: Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isa. 7 : 14).

"And there shall come forth a shoot out of the stock of Jesse, and a branch out of his roots shall bear fruit: and the Spirit of Jehovah shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of Jehovah" (Isa. 11 : 1, 2).

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (Isa. 9 : 6).

Than this collocation of majestic names there is nothing more sublime in literature, ancient or modern. Every title is in harmony with the characteristics of the Messiah as they are manifested in his unique life, death, and resurrection. The majesty of these titles poets have endeavored to sing and

musicians to echo; but the loftiest genius of both arts falls far short of the celestial glory and divine mystery and majesty of the titles themselves.

The criticism of modern scholarship on these wonderful words is not unknown to me as I quote them. The doctrine taught by these quotations is the subject of sharp discussion to-day. It will be the subject of still sharper discussion during the next decade. But the words will sing themselves through all the comments of critics, through all the churches of Christ, through all the creeds of Christendom, and through all the centuries of history, whatever critics, higher or lower, may say.

We take another step forward. About one hundred years pass and the voice of the plaintive Jeremiah is heard. This timid, modest, shrinking man can sing a noble song when Christ is his subject. He was a mere youth when the Lord first came to him in the thirteenth year of Josiah, 629 B. C. Hear his words as he looks down the vista of the coming years: "Behold, the day is come, saith Jehovah that I will raise unto David a righteous branch and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is his name whereby he shall be called: Jehovah our righteousness" (Jer. 33 : 14-16).

This latter name of the Messiah is peculiarly instructive and beautiful. Christ is spoken of as

Jehovah Tsidkenu, Jehovah our Righteousness. Here we have one name of God, Jehovah, expressing his eternal and self-existence; but the other name, Tsidkenu, describes him as our mediator. This is a blessed name. Jeremiah, we thank thee for this sweet thought, for this comforting title, for this glorious prophecy. We add this heavenly note to the divine song of Christ's advent which echoes through the ages.

We now listen to another voice. It is the voice of him who descended from one of the highest families in Judah, if not a family even of royal blood. The voice comes from the court of Babylon; it is the voice of the brave, the noble, the prayerful Daniel. In his new career he received the polish of education which Oriental etiquette demands of all courtiers. He gives us clear predictions of the Messiah as the Redeemer; he gives us detailed statements of his character and work, statements which were literally illustrated in our Lord's life. His words may be found especially in the ninth chapter, and in other parts of the book which bears his name. His advanced age did not permit him to return with his people to Palestine, but never for a moment did their interest fail to fill his heart with hope and joy. No other Old Testament prophet showed so accurate a knowledge of the political vicissitudes of the empires of the world; but especially did he see the glory of the coming kingdom of the divine Messiah.

Let us now hear the voice of one of the twelve

minor prophets, Micah, who prophesied 759-699 B. C. and was consequently a contemporary of Isaiah. No one of his noble prophecies is so interesting to the Christian as that in which the native place of the Messiah is announced; the mention of this name is instructive in the greatest degree:

“But thou, Bethlehem Ephratha, which art little to be among thousands of Judah, out of thee shall one come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting” (Micah 5 : 2).

This is the Scripture which guided the scribes who told Herod where Christ should be born; and it was universally known among the Jews that Christ should come out of the town of Bethlehem. It was fitting that he who is the “Bread of Life” should be born in a town whose name signifies the “house of bread.” From this small and insignificant place was to come the Messiah who should fill earth and heaven with the glory of his majestic name. Near this place Jacob buried his beloved Rachel. Here Ruth gleaned in the wheat-fields of Boaz; and here David showed his youthful valor in protecting his father’s flocks. How could Micah have mentioned Bethlehem as the birthplace of the Messiah seven hundred years before the event, had he not been guided by the Spirit of God? How could he have known of the action of the Roman government in the taxing of the people, and the consequent journey to Bethlehem, by mere human knowledge?

THE VOICE OF ZECHARIAH.

We pass over the possible prophecy of Haggai and of the voices of others and listen to the words of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, eleventh in the order of the minor prophets. He comforts the people with pledges of protection, although other nations should be swept away, and then he sketches with vivid touch the picture of the blessings and glories of the advent of the Messiah:

“Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion; for lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith Jehovah” (2 : 10).

“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, thy King cometh unto thee; he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, even upon a colt, the foal of an ass” (9 : 9).

‘In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness” (13 : 1).

Time does not permit me to make comments of any length on these wonderful prophecies. Indeed, comment is not necessary. Every reader of the New Testament sees at a glance how literally these prophecies were fulfilled in the unique birth and life of Him who was Son of man and Son of God.

Reference might have been made to Job, in the land of Uz, who speaks of the Messiah as his living Redeemer; quotations might also have been

made from other Old Testament writers, but the witness of a sufficient number of prophets has been given to establish the identity of the Messiah. We therefore come now to Malachi, the last writer in the canon of the Old Testament, who was probably contemporary with Nehemiah, as in his time the second temple was already built.

He declares that John the Baptist, the harbinger of the Messiah, should be sent, and that the Messiah would come suddenly to his temple at Jerusalem. "Behold, I send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me; and the Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple" (Mal. 3 : 1).

"But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise, with healing in his wings" (Mal. 4 : 2).

We know that when forty days old Christ was presented in the temple; at twelve years of age he was in the temple as his Father's house; and when he made his triumphal entry into Jerusalem he went directly to the temple. Malachi teaches us that the Lord would purify the sons of Levi, and would speedily exterminate prevailing evils. He further assures us that the Messiah shall make up his jewels and shall distinguish between the righteous and the wicked. Christ, as the light of the world, comes with healing in his beams; in him the day-spring from on high visited the people.

It thus comes to pass that all the voices of all

the prophets bore witness to Jesus Christ as the Messiah of God. These voices were parts of the divine "Oratorio of the Messiah." All is now in readiness for his august advent. We are with the shepherds of Bethlehem. They are watching their flocks. Suddenly, before the dazzled eyes of these shepherds, the glory of the Lord appeared with out-streaming splendor. They are hushed into solemn and holy awe as a celestial soloist, an angel, chants the song of the long-promised Messiah. No sooner is his voice hushed than the attendant angels burst forth into the sweetest words ever heard by human ears: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men."

This was the sublime and divine Hallelujah Chorus of the "Oratorio of the Messiah," which all of the prophets had been singing in all countries and in all centuries. Men and women, will you receive the Christ of God as your Saviour? Although there was no room for him in the inn, I beseech you to make room for him in your hearts. So, receiving him, and living with him, you shall one day reign with him in glory, and at last you shall sing, joining your voices with those of a great multitude in heaven, saying, "Unto him that loveth us and loosed us from our sins by his blood; to him be the glory and the dominion for ever and ever." This will be the sublime song of the consummation of the ages—the Hallelujah Chorus of the eternal Oratorio of the divine Messiah.

III

HISTORY AND THE ADVENT

Text: But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son.—Gal. 4: 4.

WE have this morning the next sermon in the course of "Advent Sermons." Last Sunday morning your attention was called to "Prophecy and the Advent"; this morning it is called to "History and the Advent." The advent of Jesus Christ is the highest, the deepest, the tenderest, and the holiest event in the history of the race. The entrance of Jesus Christ into humanity is the most momentous occurrence known to human and perhaps to angelic history. It marked the close of the old dispensation, and it emphasized the beginning of the new dispensation. Christ's cradle is the turning-point in history, in literature, in art, in architecture, in religion, and in all that goes to make the highest elements of human civilization. It was, as suggested in another sermon in this volume, a great idea of Dionysius Exiguus, Dionysius the Little, who was a Scythian by birth and an abbot in Rome, when in the year A. D. 526, he devised a new calendar and dated it with the birth of Christ, as the beginning of a new era. He placed the birth in the seven hundred

and fifty-fourth year of Rome. We now know that he was in error by at least four years. He ought to have dated it the seven hundred and fiftieth year of Rome; so that this ought to be 1910 instead of 1906. Nevertheless, it was a marvelous conception on the part of Dionysius to give us the birth of Christ as the beginning of this new era. All events before the Advent converged to the cradle of the Christ; all events since have diverged from the cradle of the Christ. He is the true student of history who studies all events, ancient, medieval, and modern, in the light that radiates from the cross.

I propose this morning to consider the contribution made by the three great nations of antiquity to the preparation for the advent of Christ. I shall not, indeed, speak of all the nations. We know that great streams of humanity went out from The Pamirs, the Bam-i-dunya, the 'Roof of the World,' the elevated mountain region in central Asia, near the sources of the river Oxus. One stream flowed to Greece, to Rome, to France, to Spain, to Britain, and to Germany. Another stream flowed to Egypt; and Egypt, ancient and modern, is the miracle of that Aryan migration. Still another stream flowed to India; and India, the mysterious and majestic, is the result of that historic stream flowing from the "Roof of the World."

But in this discourse I limit my thought to three great nations—the Hebrew, the Greek, and the Roman. These nations contributed greatly toward

the preparation of the world for the birth of Jesus Christ.

CONTRIBUTION OF THE HEBREWS.

The Hebrews performed a great part in preparing for the advent of Christ. This people witnessed for God amid the idolatries of surrounding nations. Judaism was an oasis in the darkness of the idolatrous peoples. Israel carried in its bosom the promise that in the posterity of Abraham all nations should be blessed. Moses the lawgiver; David, king and psalmist; Isaiah the evangelical prophet; and finally John the Baptist—these all had their part in preparing the way for the coming of the Christ. The light grew brighter and brighter, until John the Baptist, standing with one foot in the old dispensation and one foot in the new, is permitted to lift up his eyes, and then his voice saying: "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world!"

After the Babylonish captivity the Jews adhered tenaciously to the letter of the law, although often unfortunately ignorant of its spirit. They cherished bigoted horror of the heathen nations; and the Jews in turn were heartily hated by the heathen peoples. After the time of the Maccabees, one hundred and fifty years before Christ, they were divided into three mutually hostile sects. The most important of these sects was the Pharisees, once a most honorable name, meaning the "separate ones," those who were separated from ordinary persons by

the correctness of their opinions and the holiness of their lives. But they finally were characterized by ritual formalism, by legal self-righteousness, and by fanatical bigotry. In the New Testament—with such rare and illustrious exceptions as Nicodemus, Gamaliel, and Paul—they were charged with gross hypocrisy. Dr. Philip Schaff has rightly called them “the Jewish Stoics.” The next great sect was that of the Sadducees. They were skeptical, rationalistic, and secular. They corresponded in Judaism to the Epicureans in Greek and Roman heathenism. The third of these sects was that of the Essenes. They were a mystic and ascetic people living in monkish seclusion on the shores of the Dead Sea. But the Pharisees and the Sadducees were everywhere conspicuous as the foes of Jesus. These were the three great sects into which Judaism had fallen apart before the coming of Christ. Since the battle of Philippi, forty-two years before Christ, the Jews were subject to the heathen Romans. They were most cruelly governed by Herod the Idumæan, and by his sons, and by Roman procurators. They longed for political liberty; they sighed for a great national deliverer; they waited, hoped, and prayed for a temporal dominion more brilliant even than that in the days of great David. Josephus, their own historian, describes them as a people debased and ungodly, and as deserving all the punishment which they so terribly received in connection with the destruction of Jerusalem.

The distinguishing characteristic of Hebrew civilization was religion. Renan tells us that the Hebrew had a genius for religion; and the younger Humboldt said that they had a "talent for religion." It must thus never be forgotten that the distinctive characteristic of Hebrew civilization was devotion to religion. With all the formalism of the Jewish people and with their occasional tendencies to idolatry, they nevertheless were in their deepest nature religious. They possessed the holy Scriptures; and their government was a theocracy, their ruler being Jehovah. They observed frequent festivals and they constantly offered sacrifices. Their wars, their heroes, their poetry, their music, were all sacred. All their life, public and private, all their daily employments were marked by significant religious ceremonies. Their deepest spirit was monotheistic and religious. The most illiterate peasant had his full share in these religious ceremonies as truly as the most learned rabbi. They worshiped one God. What are the best hymns of Greece? Must not the answer be that they are the vagaries of the mythological fancies of the Greek people? What was the literature of Rome? You are a student of Virgil, of Horace, of Livy, of Salust. What was the religious literature of Rome? Did Roman literature ever give us a prayer? I say, without fear of contradiction, there is scarcely in all Roman literature any utterance which could properly be called a prayer.

Now turn from the literature of Greece and Rome to the literature of the Hebrews and you find the Hebrew psalmists chanting songs of praise to God that fill the soul of every Christian to-day with holy joy. You find the Hebrew songs embodying prayers which have passed into the devotions of the Christian church. It has been well said that there is a light on the mountains of Judea which never shone on Olympus and Parnassus. There rayed out from the hill of Zion a glory that never was seen on the seven hills of Rome. Honored Hebrews, light-bearers, harbingers of Jesus the Christ! We thank you for the noble part performed by you in building a highway through the ages to the cradle in Bethlehem!

THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE GREEKS.

The Greeks also had their part to perform. The heathenism of the Greeks has been rightly called the religion of beauty; but it was sadly marred by gross vices. Their gods were men in whom were seen the vices as well as the virtues of the Greeks themselves. You cannot expect a people to be better than their gods. If the gods are bad, the people cannot be good. That is a statement to which assuredly no reasonable objection can be made. Now the gods of the Greeks were themselves subject to iron fate. They were reproached by one another with folly and with crimes. They were involved in perpetual quarrels and in bitter jealousies. They were full of wrath, envy, hatred, and lust. They charged one

another with cruelty, with perjury, with lying, and with gross impurity. Still this heathenism was groping in the darkness after the "Unknown God." Beyond all this polytheism there was a background of monotheism. All polytheism has grown out of a primitive monotheistic stock. Thus monotheism preserved the memory of a golden age and of a fall. Many of the traditions of Greek mythology were echoes of a purer primal religion. Mythological fancies of the mingling of gods with men were unconscious prophecies of the incarnation of Jesus Christ. Every true classical student will see in these mythologies prophecies of Jesus, vague, misty, mysterious, but still real prophecies of the incarnation of the Christ.

Men have never been able to blot out entirely the image of God from their souls. Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle were struggling after God. They did not fully know the fact, but they were still feeling after him. Christ was even then the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world. The old-fashioned missionaries to heathen peoples erred in denouncing all forms of heathenism without showing how Christianity is the reality after which the heathen were unconsciously striving. These good missionaries made a great mistake. The broad-minded, the philosophical missionary follows the example of the Apostle Paul on Mars Hill. He sees an altar "to the unknown God." He virtually says to the people, "I observe that in all things you are

very religious. I have come to tell you about the Unknown God to whom you have built this altar." If I were speaking to Plato, to Socrates, to Aristotle, I should say: "You are walking in light that comes from the Cross. You do not know it, but it is light from Jesus Christ, for he is the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. Come into fuller light. Let me take you by the hand and lead you to the feet of Jesus Christ the Unknown God whom vaguely, ignorantly, and yet honestly you are seeking." If I were to meet Buddha and Confucius and Zoroaster, I would give to each of them a similar message. Without knowing it they were feeling after God; all the light of Buddha came from Christ; all the glory of Zoroaster is the reflection from the uplifted face of God; and all the wisdom of Confucius is the gift of Jesus Christ.

The chief characteristic of the Greek was the perfection of intellect in art, in poetry, in literature, in philosophy. The Greek was restless in his activity, hence he became a great athlete and a great colonizer. The Greek early supplanted the Phœnician by dotting with his civilization all the islands of the Mediterranean, and by dotting with that civilization the shores of the Mediterranean itself. The Greek planted his arts, sciences, philosophy, and literature in Asia Minor, and Italy. Then Alexander carried the Greek language and civilization from Alexandria to India. The Greek was thus a student of naviga-

tion and of geography. The Tigris and the Euphrates practically became Greek rivers. The city of Miletus became the mother of three hundred towns, colonizing the entire coast of the Black Sea. The Greek was like the Highlander in Scotland, fond of visiting all lands, but loving his own land with a love surpassing expression. In the age of Pericles Greek civilization had become the highest the world had ever seen. Such was the Greek. The result was that he spread his language—the richest, the most delicate, the most scientific language the world has ever known, over practically the civilized world. Jewish colonists of Babylon spoke Greek; Greek formed the *lingua franca* in all the countries founded by these colonizers. It was not by accident that the New Testament was written in Greek. It was most important that there should be a language that should be the mold into which the new thought should be poured, a language so scientific and accurate as was the Greek. When Jesus says *baptizo*—to baptize, to immerse—he does not mean *rantizo*—to pour. He uses exact words in the most perfect language. It would have been impossible for the apostles and Christ to be more exact. There was never a language written by human hand or spoken by human lips so accurate as the Greek, and that was the language chosen as the medium for the New Testament revelation. In this fact we see clearly the wisdom of God.

But what was the other side of the Greek people?

It must be admitted that the lowest of social conditions prevailed; that political integrity was lost; and that social purity was unknown. The philosophers were sophists. There were only two classes of women; one was ignorant and reasonably virtuous, the other was educated and abominably vicious. Wherever the Greek civilization went its vices went. Antioch and Alexandria became worse than Athens and Corinth. Moral diseases were "an open sore" all over Greece. All Greece was crying out for help. All Greece was lifting up its hands for a Healer, for a Saviour, for Jesus Christ.

THE ROMAN CONTRIBUTION.

Rome had its part in preparing for the Advent. The Romans were called to carry out the idea of the State and of civil law. They united the nations of the world in a colossal empire. This empire stretched from Britain to the Euphrates, and from the deserts of Libya to the banks of the Rhine. They believed that they were called to rule the world. This was their slogan long before Virgil expressed the thought in poetic speech. God planted on the banks of the Tiber a power that stretched its mighty arm out over all the nations. The Romans were like the Russians of to-day—they believed that they were called of God to be the world's masters. That is the secret article in the creed of every devout Russian imperialist to-day. Russia believes that she is God's chosen nation to rule the world,

and that the day will come when all the nations shall lie prostrate at the feet of mighty Russia. This belief is partly the result of political ambition, but it is especially the result of religious faith. Give the Russian credit for his religious faith. He wants to see the whole world bow before the Cross, but only before the Cross as the Cross is held in Russia's cruel hand. The Romans called their city *urbs aeterna*, the eternal city. The Romans with wolf-like rapacity became, as Tacitus, their first great historian, says, "the insatiable robbers of the world." But the worship of their gods became absurd superstition. Morality and chastity sank into vice and debauchery. The lower class had no higher ambition than "bread and the circus." The huge empire of Tiberius and Nero was slowly and surely crumbling to its final dissolution. It was a nation of tyrants on the one side, and of slaves on the other. Their vast empire broke down. This must be admitted; indeed it is to be affirmed. The Roman nation united the North and South and East and West by the bonds of a common language and culture, by common laws, and by common customs. Men of every nation flowed to Rome. The Romans were, as has been often said, the great road-makers of the world. Roman roads were the world's great arteries radiating from the eternal city. Rome mastered the world by her great roads. Over these roads were to ride in triumph great conquerors and rulers; but over these roads, in the providence of God,

went the apostles as the ambassadors of the Cross of Christ. Rome built the roads for her soldiers and emperors; God consecrated the roads for the messengers of the Cross.

Rome was broken in heart. Her emperors were deified, her people were enslaved. Greece was calling out for a Healer, Rome calling out for a Consoler, and both Greece and Rome were waiting for the fulness of the time for the birth of Jesus the Christ, fulfilling the words of my text: "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son." There was also an important element of preparation caused by the mingling of the Hebrews with the Greeks and the Romans by the dispersion of the Hebrews and by the adoption on the part of the Hebrews of many of the characteristics of the peoples among whom they sojourned. Thus there was a leavening of the Jewish nation because of the influence of their heathen neighbors, while the Jews in turn greatly affected those heathen neighbors.

Permit me therefore to sum up my thought. Each of these lines was necessary. Without the Hebrew, Christianity could not have arisen. Without the influence of the Greek and the Roman, Christianity would have been a provincial faith, a sect of Judaism, instead of becoming the religion of the world. All these lines of preparation centered in Judea. There was the home of the Hebrew religion, of Greek civilization, and of Roman power.

The coins of the Jews bore the superscription of the Cæsars. The inscription on the cross was in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. The cross stood at the confluence of these three streams of civilization. The Greek literature and the universal empire of the Romans, next to Judaism, were the chief agents in preparing the world for Christ. They laid the natural foundation for the supernatural structure of the celestial kingdom. The Greeks were vastly more important than the numberless hosts of the Asiatic empire. The Greeks, as we have seen, developed science and art. Alexander the Great, although a Macedonian by birth, was the truest Greek of his age. Napoleon was not a Frenchman; he was an Italian, but the Italian-Frenchman became the greatest Frenchman of his time. Alexander conceived the idea of making Babylon the seat of a Greek empire of the world. His empire with his death fell to pieces and with the quarrels of his generals his power was dissipated. But the Greeks carried their language over the civilized world. New channels of communication were open everywhere. The Hebrew gave the direct and positive preparation; the Greek and the Roman, the indirect and negative preparation for the Advent; and the coming of Christ was thus the fulfilment of the highest dreams of Hebrew, Greek, and Roman.

The whole world repeats that experience. Every individual lives over again the life of these three nations. Here are men who are striving to find

Christ by their own self-righteousness. They fail. Here are men who are striving to find Christ by art and culture. They fail. Here are men who are striving to find Christ by law, by civilization, by organization. They fail. Then comes the Christ. Thus the fulness of the time was come. There is a fulness in all God's plans. Christ could not fittingly have come sooner; neither could he fittingly have longer postponed his coming. The hour struck: it was the moment of eternal purpose. Peace reigned.

The birth of Christ gave vitality to a dying Judaism, gave new hope to a sin-sick Greece, and new and diviner ambitions to world-encircling Rome. That birth brought heaven to earth and gave a deeper meaning to the blessed name Immanuel, "God with us."

Is there room for Christ to-day in your brain, room for him in your heart, room for him in your home, room for him in your office, room for him in your entire life? Bow at his feet and receive him as your Prophet, Priest, and King!

IV

GLORIA IN EXCELSIS

Text: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men"; or, as in the New version, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men in whom he is well pleased."—Luke 2 : 14.

IN Norway, especially in the vicinity of the North Cape, when the long night of winter is nearing its close, many of the people dressed in holiday attire stand on the tops of mountains awaiting the first glimpse of the returning sun. The moment it is seen, embracing one another, they exclaim: "Behold the sun!" From mountain-top to mountain-top the cry goes over these parts of the country: "Behold the sun! Behold the sun!" Jesus Christ is the Sun of Righteousness. Noble hearts and longing souls who waited for the "Consolation of Israel," greeted his advent with songs of joy. We thus have the "Benedictus" of Zacharias, the "Magnificat" of Mary, the "Nunc Dimittis" of Simeon, and the "Gloria in Excelsis" of the angels. The very air was tremulous with song when Christ was born. These devout souls were waiting for the Sun of Righteousness, who was rising with healing in his wings.

Beautiful is the title which Zacharias gives to the Christ—the Day-spring. The Apostle Peter called

him the Day-star, and the Apostle John writes of him as the Bright and Morning star. The word day-spring is literally the rising, as of the sun, the dawn of a new and heavenly day. The Magi said: "We have seen his star in the East." Most appropriate is the word day-spring in this connection. In Palestine there is no twilight, no gloaming. The sun suddenly drops below the horizon in the evening and the darkness almost immediately falls; and in the morning the sun rises with equal suddenness and the earth is flooded with its supernal splendor. The birth of Christ was the coming of the day-spring, the rising of the Sun of Righteousness upon a world long in darkness and sorrow.

THE ANGELIC CHOIR.

Amid the many voices that greeted the advent of the Christ were the songs of celestial choirs. Once in Scripture God is represented as singing. The passage in which this representation is given is most instructive and beautiful. The Lord God is represented as rejoicing over his people with joy, as resting in his love, and as expressing that joy and love with singing. This is a marvelous description of God. Think what the church would give for the words and score of that divine song! Next to that desire is the longing to know the score of the anthem chanted by the celestial choir when Christ was born. My text gives us the substance of the wonderful anthem which the angels sang. Heaven and earth

seemed to join hands and to touch hearts on that glorious occasion.

These inhabitants of heaven seemed to be ever near the earth while Christ sojourned among men. They ministered to him while in the wilderness of temptation; they strengthened him in the agony of Gethsemane; they sat at the head and the foot of the place where he lay in the sepulcher, and it was most fitting that they should announce his advent with songs of celestial joy.

The eyes of the shepherds might well have been dazzled by the outstreaming glory of the Lord which wrapped them about as a mantle of light. The sublime solo soon gave place to the triumphant chorus. It seemed as if the heavens were filled with attendant angels who only awaited the signal to burst forth in heavenly music. In the olden time when the sacrifice was laid on the altar the blast of silver trumpets sounded out clear and strong; so when he came, who was the true Sacrifice, and when the angel soloist had ended his song a multitude of the heavenly host chanted again the blessed message of the first herald-angel. This anthem in its heavenward aspects was "glory," and in its earthward significance it was "peace."

It has sometimes been said that this was the first, as it was the last time that angelic voices were heard by mortal ears. But strictly speaking this is the second time that voices from heaven fell upon human ears. In Isaiah's rapt vision heaven was

opened and the glory of the Lord was seen. Then the trembling posts of the temple almost broke down as the glory of Jehovah filled the courts. The same glory now floods the plains of Bethlehem. Then an angelic hymn announced the coming of the kingdom; now another angelic hymn proclaims that the heavenly King has come. As has been well said by Edersheim, "Then it had been the *Tris-Haggion* of prophetic anticipation; now that of evangelic fulfilment."

HEAVEN'S GALA DAYS.

Nothing could be more fitting than that the angels who stood around the throne of the heavenly King should follow him to the earth when he came on his message of mercy. The angels have had two gala days in their unique and glorious experience: the first was when the foundations of creation were laid with shouts of joy, the sons of God singing together; the second was when the foundations of the new heaven and the new earth were laid, the angels chanting the event with loftier songs than had ever before been heard, even in heaven's glorious temple. The very air seemed sacred since it bore so sweet a message from heaven; the earth itself seems consecrated since the coming of its Lord and Creator. We may well believe that angels from a sinless heaven never performed a more welcome service than when they made the plains of Bethlehem echo with their songs of joy when the Christ was born.

Angels are presented to us as bending reverently forward and gazing intently, as if listening earnestly to the mysteries of God concerning the coming of Christ. Possessed by a holy curiosity, they are trying to discover the secrets of human redemption. It was, therefore, fitting that these lofty intelligences, at the supreme moment of God's sublimest disclosure of eternal love, should break forth into matchless music over the cradle of the infant Redeemer. Poetry and music have often exhausted themselves in preparing and chanting cradle songs. Mothers have found their highest joy in crooning these songs over mere earthly cradles and human babes. It was fitting, therefore, that the divine-human Babe should have an angel choir to chant his cradle song, and it was further fitting that that song should be an anthem radiant with glory to God and beautiful with peace toward men.

THE ANGELIC DOXOLOGY.

This sublime anthem recognizes God as the author of human salvation. The gift of the Messiah redounds to the praise of God. All his works manifest his glory, but the gift of his Son for the redemption of man calls for praise to God in the highest places and in the loftiest strains. The advent of Christ was a new manifestation of God's eternal love to sinful men. It is no wonder, therefore, that this song, "Gloria in Excelsis," should have been so honored in the service of the church

for so many generations. A single expression employed in this song, and coming to us along the ages, through the Latin Vulgate version has given us the title by which the angelic song is known. Probably the chant, as we now have it, originated in the Greek Church about the year 300. It is one of the noblest compositions the church has ever produced. It fittingly prolongs the echoes of the celestial choir which announced the birth of the Messiah King.

The birth of Christ inaugurated a new era in human history; it was really the birth of a new race. The incarnation is the basal fact in Christianity. The evangelist John distinctly affirms that the Word was God, and also that the Word became flesh. The incarnation of Christ was the entrance of Deity into humanity in a fuller and diviner sense than ever before. The real meaning of the incarnation is the actual entrance of God into humanity by a supernatural birth. To deny the supernatural birth is to deny the real significance of the incarnation itself.

PROGRESSIVE REVELATIONS.

God made himself known in creation, in providence, and in revelation; but the incarnation was the sublimest manifestation of God the world had ever before known. God's revelation of himself is evermore progressive; he reveals himself as men are able to understand, and even to endure, the revelation. The glory of the Lord that shone about the

shepherds was the miraculous effulgence which the rabbins called the Shechinah. This miraculous light was a lambent flame in the bush which burned but was not consumed; it went before Israel in a pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night; it flooded the temple of Solomon with an unendurable brightness; it was the glory which the shepherds saw at Bethlehem; it was the radiant cloud which enfolded the ascending Lord, and it will be the canopy over the great white throne on which he will sit to judge the world. Well might this effulgent brightness appear in glad homage to the incarnation. There has thus been in the glory of the Shechinah ever an increasing light, for Christ is the true pillar of cloud to guide his church through the world to her triumph and glory in heaven.

There has ever been a progressive revelation of Christ in his person. He was the Shiloh in Genesis; the I Am in Exodus, and the Star and Scepter in Numbers. In Deuteronomy he is our Rock; in Joshua he is the Captain of the Lord's Host, and in Job he is the Redeemer. In Isaiah he is the Wonderful Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace. In Jeremiah he is the Lord Our Righteousness; in Daniel he is the Messiah; in Zechariah he is the Branch, and in Haggai he is the Desire of All Nations. In Malachi he is the Messenger of the Covenant and the Sun of Righteousness.

There is a progression also in his incarnations. It

was he who appeared to Moses in the burning bush; it was he who appeared to Joshua as the captain of the Lord's host; it was he who appeared to Gideon as he was threshing corn, and who saluted him with the words, "The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valor." There were thus many temporary incarnations before the one great incarnation in the manger-cradle at Bethlehem.

The incarnation of Deity was dimly hinted in many legends in heathen mythology. Parts of these mythologies were unconscious prophecies of great Christian truths. Heathenism was feeling after God if haply it might find him. Philosophy was seeking after Deity, but in its loftiest reach it only built an altar to "the unknown God." The human mind must have God in human form. God as the uncreated and the invisible, and not also as the incarnate, must remain incomprehensible, except to a few devout worshipers. But Deity incarnate, enfleshed, embodied in human form, dwelling among men, rejoicing in their joy, weeping with their sorrow, cradled with their babes—Deity thus united to humanity men can understand, admire, trust, and adore. The incarnation of Deity is thus an absolute necessity of our poor human nature. To worship God as Father, and Christ as Brother, we must see the divine in human form. The greatest of all marvels is that Christ should come from the bosom of the Father to the cradle in Bethlehem.

The incarnation is the sublimest revelation of

eternal love. In his marvelous description of the mind of Christ in the second chapter of Philippians, the Apostle Paul represents Christ as not grasping and holding his conscious equality with God, but as emptying himself and taking the form of a servant. This was the first great step in the downward plunge. After the incarnation, Gethsemane with its cup, and Calvary with its cross were inevitable. God's eternal, limitless, and unspeakable love gave the world its crowning manifestation when his only begotten and well-beloved Son became the child of Mary, and thus tented in human flesh. The human soul constantly cries out with Philip, "Show us the Father." We must see God in human form in order that the longing of our hearts and the logical demands of our minds may be satisfied. Sitting at the feet of Jesus his words to Philip fall upon our ears and hearts as God's sweetest benediction, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

A PRAISEFUL ASCRIPTION.

It ought to be remembered that this angelic doxology, "Glory to God in the highest," is not a prayer, but an ascription of praise. The angels did not pray "Glory be to God," but the angels joyfully exclaimed "Glory is to God." This was no time to be praying to God to manifest his glory when the earth was radiant with the sublimest manifestation of that glory which it had ever known. It was a time when even blind men might see and deaf men

might hear. There is a blessed connection between the three stanzas of this divine anthem; there is a close relation between peace on earth, good-will to men on the one side and the highest glory to God on the other side. The angels are declaring that the rebellious race of man is to be subdued; that this belligerent world is not forever to flaunt its defiant flag against heaven's King. We have here a sweet implication, if not a direct assurance, that lost men shall be redeemed, manifold sin be controlled, and that Satan shall be destroyed by the personal Christ. Thus the anthem may well fill heaven's lofty dome with its doxology, "Glory to God in the highest."

If we follow the Revised version the dominant thought of the angelic host is that peace will come to men of good will. This may mean to men of good will toward one another, or toward God, or with whom God is well pleased. It is difficult to decide which is the true reading. Our common reading, moreover, is greatly to be preferred. It gives the more simple and natural meaning of the word translated, "good will," and it is very much more in harmony with the doxology found in the first part of the verse. This is a sweet and heavenly benediction. The presence of God embodied in human flesh was designed to produce peace between men and their fellow-men; between the opposing elements in men's own hearts and between men and God. Christ is the Prince of Peace. God was now in Christ reconciling the world to himself.

When men are at peace with God they will be at peace with one another. It is a striking fact that when Jesus was born the world experienced a profound peace. The sound of war was not heard throughout the boundaries of Rome's mighty empire. Beautifully has Milton in his "Ode to the Nativity" said:

Nor war, or battle's sound
Was heard the world around.
The idle spear and shield were high up hung,
The hooked chariot stood
Unstained with hostile blood,
The trumpet spake not to the armed throng,
And kings sat still with awful eye,
As if they surely knew their sovereign Lord
was by.

By order of the Emperor Augustus the gates of the temple of Janus were closed for only the third time in seven centuries. A bright prospect was opening for the human race. Long delayed is the fulfilment of the prophecy that swords shall become plowshares and spears pruning-hooks. But the day will surely come when this blessed result shall be secured.

Two nations are now engaged in awful war (1905), and the effusion of blood makes the heart sick and the spirit faint. But war's horrors are hastening the days of universal peace. The day will assuredly come when all international difficulties will be settled by international arbitration. The

last few months have witnessed the signing of a greater number of treaties of arbitration than were ever before made in as many years. America has the honor of leading the nations in this blessed mission of peace and good will toward all men. Presidents McKinley and Roosevelt have done more to secure this result than was done by all preceding presidents of the United States. Secretary Hay, the foremost diplomatist in the world, beautifully blended American patriotism with the teaching of the Golden Rule, in negotiating treaties and in preserving peace with many nations. He lifted diplomacy to a higher level than it ever before reached in the history of the race; he more nearly realized the meaning of this celestial anthem in human affairs than was ever before known since the birth of the Prince of Peace.

We need still higher standards of diplomacy, patriotism, heroism, and religion. We are pressing toward the realization of these higher standards. Already the eastern sky is radiant with the crimson and gold of at least one element of millennial blessing—the preservation of peace, the abolition of war, and the universality of arbitration.

CHRIST AND TRUE GREATNESS.

By the manner in which he entered into the world Christ dignified the estate of childhood. He hallowed the cradles of the world. He made babyhood beautiful and divine. As he hallowed the grave by

making it his temporary resting-place, so he has made the cradle radiant by having lain therein. He has also glorified motherhood throughout the world. He has put a crown of honor on every mother's brow. He has also glorified poverty. He was the only child ever born into this world who had his choice as to how he should come. He might have come, as did the first Adam, a full-grown man; he chose to come a helpless babe. He might have come in all the pomp and pageantry of earthly kings; he chose to come in lowly poverty.

His cradle teaches us also wherein consists true greatness. When he lay in that cradle mighty Cæsar was on his throne. Where now are Cæsar and his throne? At Cæsar's name nations trembled; but that name and power and throne have perished. The empire of Jesus endures—it is the empire of undying love, and it will never perish. His name shall endure longer than the sun. All kings shall fall down and serve him. The empire of love triumphs over the empire of power.

O men and women, submit now to the scepter of his love; kneel at his cradle and give him the gold, the frankincense, and the myrrh of sincere devotion. Then rise to have peace in your heart, in your home, and in the social circles in which you move. At this glad Christmastide let us settle all private and personal grudges and hates; let us forgive and forget; let us restore all sad estrangements; let us pray for peace in our own hearts and throughout the

world. O blessed Child of the Manger and Ancient of Days; O Son of Mary and Son of God, be born in our hearts to-day. Then shall we with a new experience and with an unspeakable joy join our voices with those of the celestial choir in chanting the glorious anthem: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

V

THE INCARNATION OF THE WORD

Text: And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth.—John 1: 14.

WE celebrate to-day the birth festival of our Lord. The incarnation of Christ is the central thought in the history of this world. It is the event around which all other events revolve in smaller or larger circles. All the great facts of history previous to his coming had reference to his advent; all the events since look back to that advent as the beginning of a new era. All lines of previous history converged to his manger and his cross; all lines since have radiated from these two epochal facts. His birth was the beginning not only of a new era, but of a new race; the observance of that birth is still the jubilee of the race. This festival still continues to be the most joyous celebration of the church; it makes the joy of childhood more joyous and it lightens the burdens of age and sorrow with its tender memories and its triumphant prophecies. In the chill of mid-winter in northern climes it kindles a fire of hope and joy in every heart and in every home. It is prophetic of the golden age

when Christ shall come again; when evil shall be overthrown, and when the song of a redeemed humanity shall sweep over the universe as the song of celestial choirs echoed over the plains of Bethlehem. By the gifts which characterize this season we commemorate God's great gift—the unspeakable gift of his Son to a world lost in sin and wandering in darkness. No one can rightly estimate the blessings which flow every year to all classes and conditions of men from the tender memories and gentle charities called forth by the remembrance of the Holy Child Jesus.

There is no doubt but that the selection of the twenty-fifth of December was largely governed by the existence of heathen festivals held about that season of the year. This date was not generally accepted until the fourth century. The Christmas observance was a transfiguration of such heathen festivals as Saturnalia, Juvenalia, Sigillaria, and Brumalia. These were observed in the month of December to commemorate “the golden age of universal freedom and equality in honor of the unconquered sun.” They were great holidays for children, for the poor, and for slaves. Some Christians in the third century observed the twentieth of May and others the twentieth of April, and still others kept the sixth of January as the date of Christ's birth and baptism. It seems certain that God did not intend that we should know definitely the day, the month, or even the year of our Lord's

birth. Had it been important that we should know, doubtless the facts would have been revealed.

The description of the scene by Milton in his immortal "Ode to the Nativity,"

It was the winter wild
While the heaven-born child
All meanly wrapt in the rude manger lies,

befits an English or American December rather than the one in Palestine, or anywhere in the Orient.

Perhaps there is a deep spiritual significance in the transformation of these heathen festivals. There was in them, notwithstanding their sensual abuses, what has been called an unconscious prophecy of Christian truth; there was a sweet significance in the symbolic reference to the turning of the sun after the twenty-fifth of December and his beginning of a new career, as illustrative of the birth of Christ as the Sun of Righteousness and the Light of the World. Some writers trace the institution of this festival to the Emperor Commodus at the close of the second century; there are even proofs of its observance in the reign of Diocletian 284-305, who while keeping court at Nicomedia, closed the doors of a church in which Christians were celebrating the birthday of their Lord, set the building on fire, and caused all the worshipers to perish in the flames. But doubt must attach to this date, except as a local and not a general observance of the Christian festival.

A SUGGESTIVE TITLE—"THE WORD."

The title here given to our Lord is worthy of the most careful consideration. He is known in the New Testament by a great variety of titles, the number being over one hundred. These titles are not accidental; each one voices a great truth; each one brings out some new element of his character, or some interesting fact in his prophetic and actual history. Volumes might be written on the beauty, appropriateness, and significance of these divinely given names. Other names are yet to be given to our divine Redeemer, as we are clearly taught in the book of Revelation. There are to be still more gracious revelations of the character and history of our Lord when his people are to be admitted to his immediate presence. The title here given is profoundly significant—the Word. It occurs in the proof-text of our Lord's divinity. It carries us at once beyond time and into eternity. Well has the Apostle John been represented in symbol as astride the eagle, for while other evangelists begin the history of Christ with Abraham or Adam, he sweeps back beyond time and created beings to the very bosom of the eternal God. We are not surprised that this passage of Scripture has been violently attacked; but its teaching is too plain to be misunderstood, and its testimony to the essential divinity of the Lord too emphatic to be discredited.

Many ancient heathen philosophers spoke of God

as existing in himself, and also of his revealing himself in his words and in his works. The idea of the incarnation as a revelation and enfleshment of the Deity was not unfamiliar to the minds of heathen philosophers. Their conceptions in this regard were anticipations and prophecies of the central fact of divinity and humanity revealed in the birth of Jesus Christ. The possibility of the incarnation of the Deity was a favorite theory of the Platonic school; the idea of God as a *logos*, word, or as a *nous*, a divine intelligence, was a familiar thought with the disciples of that school, and to this *logos* or *nous* the act of creation was ascribed. Some philosophers even called this *logos* or *nous* a second God. We know also that this twofold aspect of God found place in some of the Jewish writings which were under the influence of the neo-Platonic philosophy.

As the spoken word represents our thought, so Jesus Christ represents the thought of God. God had great thoughts of love toward the wayward sons of men. These thoughts must find some more expressive form of revelation than creation. Creation revealed God's hand; but the incarnation reveals God's heart. Christ was the embodiment of God's thought of love. Christ was God's name; Christ was God. Only thus could God make himself known to men so that they could see him, handle him, and under a visible form give him their affection and adoration. God the Father is a spirit and cannot be visibly represented to us, except in the

person of his Son and our Lord Jesus Christ. It thus came to pass that Christ could say unto Philip, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." We rejoice in this title of Jesus Christ—the Word. The thought of love in the bosom of the Father never found such full, sweet, and fatherly expression as when it became the Word. Our thoughts of life become tenderer and stronger when they are expressed. May we not reverentially assume to affirm that even God's thoughts of everlasting love toward the children of men, so long unspoken and unspeakable in all their fulness, became stronger and sweeter when they were voiced in the person of him, who was the eternal Word? Oh, sweet and blessed word of love! Oh, holy and divine Son, who is the embodiment of eternal love, Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word of God!

THE DIVINE IN THE HUMAN.

The truth of the union of divinity with humanity is taught us with great fulness in the text when we read "was made flesh." The more literal translation is "became flesh." Its literal rendering suggests an important truth regarding the pre-existence of our Lord, and suggests the process of the incarnation. It is important that we should go to the very heart of the word that is here used, as it teaches a transition from one state of existence to another. It is not the verb that is employed in the first verse—the mere verb of existence—and which there is properly

translated "was," but here it is the verb meaning "to become." Of course we understand that the word flesh is here a figurative expression denoting Christ's human nature in contradistinction to the pre-existent and divine Logos. It is of God as the divine Logos that the incarnation is affirmed. He is not changed simply into a man, for we are told in other Scripture that "in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." There was in the incarnation a mysterious union of divinity with humanity; the incarnate Word was the God-man, having two natures mysteriously united in one personality. We are carried at once back to the first chapter of John and the first verse which affirms the divinity of Christ, and all between that verse and the next might be regarded as parenthetical. Here the humanity of the Lord is as emphatically declared as there his divinity is emphasized.

We have therefore here clearly taught the stupendous truth of the enfleshment of the eternal Word. This truth is implied in the tenth verse of this chapter; but in the text it is reaffirmed, and we are plainly told that he took a human body. We mean by the incarnation that the Lord Jesus became a real man. The incarnation thus implied his previous existence. Both these implications are in harmony with Heb. 2 : 14 where we have the words, "As the children are partakers of flesh and blood he also himself likewise took part of the same." There are other passages, such as Phil. 2 : 6; 2

Cor. 8 : 9, and still other passages teaching the same truth. There is here such a union of the divine and the human that the incarnate God is truly God and truly man united in one glorious personality.

This doctrine was not unknown, as we have already seen, among heathen nations in that early day; it is not unknown among heathen nations in our day. The Hindus teach that there have been several incarnations of the Deity for the salvation of the lost race. In the writings of Chinese philosophers and theologians, as well as in those of Zoroaster, there are suggestions, anticipations, and prophecies of this sublime truth of Christianity. The ancient Greeks and Romans had the idea with great fulness of detail, although with ridiculous associations of Deity and humanity. Homer and Virgil constantly described the intimate relations of gods in converse with men. But all these dim and vague beliefs of uninspired writers come forth in symmetry, beauty, and glory in the person of Jesus Christ, and in the revelations of the New Testament. The humanity of our Lord is a doctrine which answers the deepest longings and realizes the highest hopes of humanity. The broken heart of our race cries out for God. We must exalt this doctrine of the incarnation, the doctrine of the perfect humanity of our Lord. On the side of his humanity he comes most tenderly near our sorrowing hearts. He shared our woes, he mingled his tears with those who wept, and he rejoiced with those

who rejoiced. We need a Saviour so near us that he can sympathize with all our griefs; we need a Saviour so far above us that he can grant us his assistance and call forth our adoration. We need a Saviour who is both human and divine; we need, in a word, such a Saviour as we have in our glorious Lord and Redeemer, Jesus Christ. In him the highest philosophy and the lowliest faith sweetly blend; in him the dreams of the ages and the yearnings of all hearts find their full realization. To-day we take up the song of the angels and chant once more with glad hearts and tuneful voices, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." To-day we stand over the cradle where lies the infant Jesus; to-day childhood is honored, motherhood is glorified, poverty is beautified, and humanity is divinized. Oh, blessed Child of the manger and still Ancient of days! Oh, blessed Son of Mary and still Son of God! At thy feet with wondering shepherds and adoring Magi we bow in lowliest reverence; we give thee the homage of our hearts; on thy brow we place the crown of human divinity and of divine humanity.

TABERNACLING AMONG US.

There are many evidences of the reality of the incarnation. One evidence was that Jesus Christ dwelt among the apostles and others in daily fellowship. He ate, drank, and slept in close association with his disciples. He was with them in

familiar intercourse for thirty years or more. They saw him for a time daily in varied circumstances and conditions. It was quite impossible that they could have been deceived as to the reality of his humanity. As a result, the Apostle John, writing years after the incarnation, crucifixion, and ascension, says: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the Word of life." At the time he wrote his Epistle there were reasons why he emphasized the humanity of his Lord. It was, therefore, incumbent upon the apostle in writing this Epistle that he should give no uncertain sound regarding so precious and essential a doctrine. He affirms here as the result of long familiarity what is taught so conclusively and sublimely in his Epistle. He was with Christ during all of his ministry; he has recorded more of the Lord's sayings than either of the other evangelists. He assures us here that he speaks as the result of long and close familiarity with God who was the Word and became flesh. He had learned how to confirm his faith in the humanity and divinity of his Lord. He had the testimony of his own eyes, of his own hands, and of all his senses. There could not have been in his case any optical illusion. He had the opportunity of the most careful and personal scrutiny. He was thus able effectually to oppose the teachings of the Docetæ that Christ was a man only in appearance and not in reality.

It is interesting to note the meaning of the word translated in our version "dwelt"; it is literally sojourned, tabernacled, or tented among them. The word beautifully illustrates the fact that heaven was Christ's proper and permanent dwelling-place, and that this earth was only his temporary abode for the accomplishment of a special mission. The Son of God honored the world with frequent temporary incarnations before becoming the child of Mary in the manger at Bethlehem. The Jehovah of the Old Testament is the Jesus of the New Testament. In the grand consummation, the highest glory of the redeemed church will be that "The tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God" (Rev. 21 : 3).

HIS GLORY MANIFESTED.

The Apostle John with the other disciples clearly beheld the glory of Jesus Christ. At the marriage in Cana of Galilee we are told of Christ that he "manifested forth his glory." His glory was often displayed also in his miracles and in his teachings; but its grandest display during his earthly sojourn was on the occasion of his transfiguration, and the Apostle John was one of the witnesses who beheld that manifestation. His glory was seen also in his crucifixion, his resurrection, and his ascension. The Apostle John could not forget these sublime displays of his inherent and divine splendor, glory, and

power. As the only Begotten of the Father he was full of grace and truth. This term is applied only to Jesus, and is applied no fewer than five times by the Apostle John. A true believer is a son by adoption; but Jesus Christ was the Son by inheritance. God grant that he may be enthroned in our hearts, that he may now be born in our souls as our Lord and Redeemer!

THE LESSONS.

The mystery of the birth of our Lord explains the mystery of his life. No stream can rise higher than its source, but a stream can rise as high as its source. The stream of his life swept through the world and rose above it, ascending higher and higher until it reached the very bosom of God. Never before, never since, was such a life lived. Only once did the plant of humanity blossom and bloom into a perfect flower. How can we explain the purity, nobility, and divinity of this life if we deny the divinity of its origin? As students of history and humanity we are bound to account for Jesus Christ. We can account for Cæsar, Napoleon, Grant, and other great men. But we affirm, without fear of contradiction, that if we deny the divinity of Christ we cannot explain the humanity of Christ. From the exaltation and uniqueness of his humanity we are driven back to belief in his divinity. Only as we accept the mystery of the birth can we find the solution of the mystery of the life; only as we admit the uniqueness

of the cradle can we explain the unicity of the cross, the grave, and the crown.

We learn also that our Lord came on a glorious mission; he came to seek and save that which was lost. His was the most sublime mission that the world has ever known. Man was lost and terribly lost; Christ came gloriously to save the lost. There is none too low for the reach of his mighty and gentle hand; there is none too foul to be washed whiter than snow in his precious blood. His people must repeat his mission, going after the lost and telling them of him who is mighty to save.

We learn also that we must make room for Jesus. There must be room for him to-day in your offices, your stores, your homes, your hearts. Oh, make room now for Jesus Christ. Have you hitherto shut him out; have you hitherto refused to listen when he has knocked at the door of your heart? He is to come again in power and great glory. Those who pierced him shall then mourn because of him; they shall shrink from the splendor of his glory. Oh, let us receive him to-day, and then shall we sing with fuller meaning than the angels knew: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

VI

THE RAISING OF JAIRUS' DAUGHTER

Texts: Matt. 9 : 18, 19, 23-26; Mark 5 : 22-24, 35-43; Luke 8 : 41, 42, 49-56.

THERE were three persons raised from the dead by our Lord. It will be profitable for us to study the narratives in their logical, which is possibly at the same time their chronological, order. The first case to which attention is called is that of the daughter of the ruler of the synagogue. We shall consider especially the narrative given by the evangelist Mark (Mark 5 : 22-24, 35-43). The account is also given in Matt. 9 : 18-26, and in Luke 8 : 41, 42, 49-56. It is fitting however at the outset to say a few words about these three miracles as a whole. They have always been regarded, and rightly, as among the mightiest proofs of divine power on the part of our Lord. No power, except it come from God, can call back the spirit of the departed and animate again the dust of the dead. Spinoza, the great Jewish philosopher and skeptic of the seventeenth century, said that if it could be proved to him that Christ raised one from the dead all his objections to the divinity of Christ, and to the inspiration of the Gospels would be at once removed.

In many of our Lord's miracles the line between the natural and the supernatural cannot be definitely traced. This is true in regard to the relation between health and sickness; one condition often lies very close to the other and it is difficult accurately to trace the transition from one to the other. The same remark will apply to the relation between storms and calms; they constantly alternate in the varying moods of seas and oceans. In the natural course of events tempests cease and are followed by calms. These results might be secured without any miraculous interposition on the part of Christ. Attention has also been called to the fact that water transmutes itself by varying agencies into wine. The peasants in the south of France, during the proper season for the growth of the grape often say when the rain falls, "The wine is falling from the sky." The same law is illustrated in the multiplication of the loaves which fed the thousands. In that case there was simply the acceleration of the process which is continually observed. Nature is all the while multiplying seeds of grain; nature is full of analogies illustrative of the same law. The single kernel deposited in the ground by the husbandman, in harmony with the same law, may become thirty, sixty, or a hundred kernels. But when we come to the miracles of raising the dead we enter an entirely different region of thought and of law; we come into contact with an entirely different class of facts. We all know that the gulf between

life and death is so immense that apart from divine interposition it is impassable. Between existence and non-existence the opposition is not relative but absolute. It is therefore quite right to regard these miracles as unimpeachable witnesses to our Lord's complete divinity.

EASE AND TENDERNESS.

It is fitting that we emphasize the ease with which Christ performed these miracles. There is not on his part any painful effort; there is no delay; there is no period of agonizing prayer. It is as easy for Christ to raise the dead as it is to utter a command concerning events of the most ordinary nature. One cannot but feel, as he stands before Christ, while he is calling back the dead to life, that he is beside the One who in the morning of creation said, "Let light be, and light was." The contrast between Elijah and Christ in this respect is very marked. When Elijah raised the son of the widow of Zarephath he had to prostrate himself upon the dead form; he had to pray and pray again; and he had to agonize in spirit before God. Thus, after delay and effort, life began to stir in the body of the dead child. Not otherwise was it when Elisha raised to life the son of the Shunammite woman. In his case also we have striking illustrations of the same experience. Here also there is delay; there is effort; there is trial, and there is a period of doubt as well as of difficulty. But not so with Christ. He speaks the

word and immediately power goes forth and the dead are raised.

Another characteristic of these miracles is the wonderful tenderness which Christ showed in the selection of the persons whom he raised from the dead. There are, as we have seen, three raisings from the dead. Who were the persons thus raised? The first was the daughter of the ruler of the synagogue; she was the only daughter and possibly an only child. The hearts of her father and mother were bound up in the life of their only daughter, but beloved as she was she was dead. Her father, just previous to her death, hastened from the side of his pale, suffering, and dying child to tell the story to Jesus and secure his help. There are but few stories even on the pages of sacred history which so charm us with their beauty and thrill us with their interest as does this narrative. Its simple pathos melts its way into our hearts, and every parent interprets it in the light of parental love. This "one only daughter" in the home of Jairus was the sunshine of his heart. It is ever so that the objects of our joy are the possibilities of our pain. Sooner or later every great love may be changed into a correspondingly great sorrow. Great was the sorrow over the death of Lazarus.

PUERILE CRITICISMS.

Just here it will be profitable to notice what critics call a contradiction in the narrative. Critics

of this character show marvelous ingenuity in the discovery of supposed contradictions among the evangelists. If objectors would spend half the energy in a careful study of the inspired record which they spend in discovering alleged discrepancies, they would find that their supposed contradictions are really sublime and divine harmonies. Because in this case the evangelist Matthew represents the father as saying that his daughter is even now dead, and Mark that she "lieth at the point of death," a striking English idiom used to set forth the fact expressed in Latin by the phrase common still, *in extremis*, and because Luke speaks of her as "a-dying," these critics have said that we have a direct contradiction. Surely nothing is easier to adjust than these supposed differences. Nothing could be more natural than that the father would use in his ignorance of the exact fact at the time of his speaking, all the expressions which all the evangelists record. He left his beloved daughter at her last gasp; her life was then ebbing away, and when he reached the side of Christ he could not tell with certainty whether or not she was then living. Perplexed as to the real state of the case he doubtless used all the expressions which the various evangelists have put into his mouth.

This man was a ruler of the synagogue. The evangelist Matthew speaks of him generally as "a certain ruler"; the latter two evangelists give us his name and identify him more accurately as one

of the officers of the synagogue. It is almost certain that the synagogue was that of Capernaum in which place Jesus then was. It is not therefore impossible that this ruler was one of the deputation which afterward came to the Lord on behalf of the heathen centurion. On this present occasion, however, he goes to Jesus, as we have seen, on behalf of his own child.

Christ at once yielded to the father's piteous appeal; but there was a delay upon the journey. The large crowd which had gathered about Christ was itself a cause of delay. There are often crowds about Christ still, crowds which may prevent us from bringing the sick to him even as was true in the days of his flesh. There was delay also on this occasion when Christ started for the ruler's house. He had not gone far when a woman presses her way through the crowd and touches the hem of his garment. Christ turns himself about and asks, "Who touched me?" You remember the disciples' reply in substance, "Master, that is a very strange question, for many are pressing about you." But Christ said with equal tenderness and authority, "Somebody hath touched me." There was a touch of faith which Christ immediately recognized, and which at once secured healing power. Thank God, Christ can still be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. A further delay was caused by the conversation which resulted from this miracle. The heart of the father, we can well suppose, was endur-

ing agony while this delay lasted. We can well imagine that the father's heart was upon his dying child in his saddened home, and that he was most impatient because of this delay. We must not suppose, however, that delays are denials on the part of Christ. He waits only that he may find the fittest time for the display of his mercy. The Lord has all eternity at his command. He is never in haste and he never delays too long.

ARRIVAL OF THE MESSENGERS.

At this point in the narrative we have an account of the coming of the messengers from the father's home. They pronounce the unspeakably sad words, "Thy daughter is dead, why troublest thou the Master any further?" I do not suppose that this message was intended for our Lord's ears, but for the father's only. The Lord was then engaged in speaking to the woman, but he heard the words; his ear is quick to catch the faintest tones expressive of the sorrows of his children. We are told that "as soon as he heard the word that was spoken he saith to the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe." These messengers probably had faith sufficient to believe that Christ could raise up the maiden although in the last stage of life, that he could fan the dying spark of life into a bright flame; but they did not seem to have believed that when that spark was entirely extinguished it would be possible for Christ again to enkindle it. Their faith

was gone ; perhaps the father's was going and just at that moment our Lord spoke his gracious words of encouragement. Doubtless, as Dean Trench suggests, we ought to emphasize the words "as soon as." The thought is that the very moment that doubt began to take the place of faith in the father's mind the Lord gave him this word of encouragement and hope. I thank the Lord Jesus for these words, "Be not afraid, only believe." Oh, this was tenderness indeed !

At that critical moment in his experience came the encouraging exhortation from the lips of Christ. How many fathers and mothers have gone through times of trial when they needed just such a message as this from the blessed Lord ! A sick son or daughter, a wayward son or daughter, will test the faith of parents until that faith is but a flickering spark. Then such a word as this from Christ will cause it to become a flame, scattering darkness and doubt and illumining heart and home. Have any of you been pleading with Christ for strength and grace in crucial experiences ? Listen then to-day and you will hear him say with the matchless sweetness of his loving voice, "Be not afraid, only believe." What precious assurances believers have of Christ's sympathy and help in time of trial !

These messengers quite misunderstood Christ when they said, "Trouble not the Master." Doubtless they were honest in their spirit and speech ; but they were quite mistaken in their judgment of his

character. Many men now in a spirit of unbelief say, "Trouble not the Master"; others carried away by the spirit of the mocking secularist say, "Trouble not the Master"; and others engrossed in the trivial things of life say, "Trouble not the Master"; and still others far down in the depths of despondency say with mingled doubt and despair, "Trouble not the Master." They all misunderstand alike their own privilege and the Lord's purpose. Forever silenced be the spirit that leads men because of their ignorance of Christ's love to use the language of these messengers. There can be no trouble on our part too insignificant to escape his notice. We honor him when we cast ourselves and our burdens upon his mighty and gentle heart.

THE RULER'S SAD HOME.

We follow this strange group as they hasten toward the ruler's home. At last his home is reached. What does our Lord find on his arrival? A large, noisy, and tumultuous company. You are aware that it was the custom of the Jews to bury their dead, if possible, on the day of their death or on the day following. You know also that they were accustomed to have large numbers of hired mourners, the number depending upon the wealth and station of the family. These mourners were ready to weep, and to lament, and to shout, and to howl, according to the instruction and remuneration which they received. They sang aloud of the

virtues of the deceased, and in doleful strains mourned with family and with friends. Minstrels also add their noise to the general confusion till the air is rent with the wailings of these hired mourners. All such manifestation of grief is utterly distasteful to persons of refined feelings. We have in the Oriental funerals of to-day evidences of the continuance of these customs. The Irish, in their wakes, give us modern representations of this wretched Oriental custom. But our Lord at once rebuked these loud expressions of grief. This he did because there was no reason to lament the maiden as if she were to remain in the power of death. While she was truly dead and not in a swoon she was so soon to be restored to life that she ought to be spoken of as asleep rather than dead. Our Lord used similar language of Lazarus, although he meant to teach that he was really dead. In the presence of Christ's fulness of life and power all the dead may be spoken of as asleep, hence the noise of this tumultuous group was utterly out of place. These mourners laughed him to scorn, showing clearly that in their belief the maiden was not only then dead, but was ever so to remain. Real mourning Christ will always respect; tears are not unmanly, they are not unchristian; but the man who wipes his eye when he sheds no tear because he would produce in others the impression that he is sympathetic, is false to himself and an abomination to Christ. Christ had no sympathy with unreality; none with cant; none

with hypocrisy of whatever kind and wherever found.

There was still another reason why these mourners should be driven out—they were not proper witnesses of so sublime and august a spectacle as was soon to be seen. Christ, therefore, dismisses them. There are always those who have no eyes to see Christ's noblest works, and no hearts to feel his tenderest words. This is as true to-day as when Christ was upon earth. Only five persons are the witnesses of the miracle—the three chosen disciples, Peter, James, and John, and the father and mother of the maiden. Dean Trench calls attention to the fact that these disciples were the elect of the elect, that they were the flower and the crown of the apostolic band; and others have spoken of the fact that they were witnesses not only of this miracle, but of the glories of the Transfiguration and of the agonies of the garden. They were the chosen three within the circle of the chosen twelve. The father and mother must also be witnesses of the great miracle and sublime mystery. The father had prayed that Christ would come to preserve his child from death. Christ could have healed the maiden without coming, and after coming he could have called her back to life without putting his hand upon her; but he has lessons to teach by all the acts performed in connection with this miracle. Behold the scene! The noisy mourners are driven out. The silence of death broods in the darkened home. Christ, his

three disciples, and the father and mother are beside the couch of the dead maiden. It is a wonderful moment; no one of these five witnesses could ever forget this experience. It was important that Christ should show the reality of his relation as the Lord of life to this maiden as the subject of death. He therefore takes the child by the hand; he speaks to her two words—marvelous words, life-giving words, words accompanied by divine power—*Talitha Cumi*. These are Aramaic words. Mark, with his characteristic vividness, records them in their original form and then interprets them, "Maiden, arise." What a marvelous moment! What a sublime sight now greets us! Could we but look for a moment into that room where the maiden of twelve lies dead with her peaceful face on her pillow, the three disciples, the father and mother, and the Lord Jesus beside her, we would certainly stand there with bated breath. Look! the maiden is springing to her feet at the touch of Christ's hand and at the sound of his voice! We are distinctly told that her spirit came again "and she arose straightway and walked." Our Lord, careful of the proprieties of every occasion, commanded that meat should be given her; a command very necessary, as her parents in their indescribable joy might have forgotten so needful a provision.

Blessed is that home where Jesus comes as the associate and Saviour of parents and children! Blessed are those children on whom the hand of

Christ rests in benediction! I would rather have my children the children of God than have them kings and princes of the earth, if they were without God and without hope. I would rather have Christ come to my home to glorify it with his presence, to sanctify it with his purity, to illumine it with his light, and to beautify it with his life than have as my guest the proudest scion of the loftiest royalty. Christ was always a practical friend in every home in which he came. I often think that his greatest glory is seen in his attention to little things. We sometimes think that we cannot be great unless we do what we call great things for God and for man; but true greatness is often best shown in doing little things in a great way, in a royal manner, and with a Christlike spirit. By commanding the parents to give food to their risen daughter Christ would prove to them that her recovery was real, that she was not a ghost, but real flesh and blood, their own beloved daughter now rescued from the power of death and restored to their love. Behold her as she sits before them, her heart throbbing with life, her eye bright with hope, her cheek flushed with health, and her whole soul glowing with love to her deliverer. What wonder and what joy must have filled that room that day!

We have gone over this story together in this simple, familiar, and I trust somewhat practical way. Let us see what lessons naturally come out of this narrative.

LESSONS.

First, we see that sorrow comes to the homes of the great as well as to the homes of the humble. This man was a ruler of the synagogue, a leader of public service, a man of influence religiously, socially, and politically, for the relation between the Church and the State in those days was very close. He was a magistrate, speaking civilly; speaking religiously, he was a ruler of the synagogue, a man of prominence and a man of power—and yet sorrow came to his home. Death comes to all, as the old Latin poet sang long ago:

Death comes with equal step,
Knocks at the palace gate
And at the cottage door.

He will come to your home; he will come to mine. His dark shadow may fall across our threshold when least we think it. None will be exempt. There are many in this house now who wear the signs of mourning. Death has been at your homes. But beloved there are sadder things than death—a dissipated son is often worse than a dead son; a wayward daughter makes sadder hearts than a dead daughter. Oh, is there a son here this morning who is bringing down his father and mother with sorrow to the grave! Perhaps there is some boy away from home who has turned his back upon his mother and his mother's God. I beeseech you to come as

the prodigal came—come confessing your sin, come back again to your Father's house!

We learn as a second lesson that Christ is the true source of help in every sorrow which may come to our homes and hearts. Doubtless this man waited long, waited to the very last before he went to Christ, waited until the flame of life was flickering and just about to go out. Too many imitate him; they will not go to God in the sunshine; they wait for the darkness of midnight. It is well that men and women should come to Christ even if it be at the eleventh hour—even if it be in the darkness of midnight; it is better that they should come even though they should do only what the sailor said he did—"throw the fag ends of life into the face of God." But how much better to come in strength, in health, in youth, and in the glory of manhood. Have Christ a guest in your home when all is merry, while the ringing laughter of children, the sweetest music ever heard in the home, is heard throughout the entire dwelling. Come then to Christ, and when the darkness comes he will be near; you will not have to pray in the language of the beautiful hymn, "Abide with me" but you will be able to sing, "Lo, thou art with me, even as thou hast promised."

Now notice as a last lesson that Christ is never appealed to in vain. It seemed for a time in this case to be in vain, that the father's faith might be tried. He might have asked, "Oh, why do those people keep him from my door? She is dying; maybe even now

it is too late!" How his heart is going from that crowd of people to his home! How he thought of that pale face! Ah, what it is to have a sick child! "Why will these people crowd about my Lord? My only hope is in Christ—if he would only come!" Ah, troubled father, he will come at the right time! You never go to Christ in vain for yourself or for others. That maiden is now dead; Jairus is dead; the mother is dead; the disciples are dead; but Jesus Christ lives. He passes up and down these aisles. He goes through these pews and he says to every parent and to every child, "What wilt thou that I should do to thee?"

O invite Christ to your home; invite Christ to your heart and have him as your constant guest, for his name's sake! Amen.

VII

THE RAISING OF THE WIDOW'S SON ¹

Text: Behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow.—Luke 7: 11-17.

THE enemies of our Lord testified that “never man spake like this man.” Both the friends and the foes of Jesus might testify that never man sympathized like this Man. Of this sympathy the narrative before us is an admirable illustration. The miracle of raising to life the son of the widow of Nain is recorded by Luke only. He records the raising from the dead of two persons by Jesus—the son of the widow of Nain and also the daughter of Jairus. Matthew and Mark record one case—that of the daughter of Jairus; and the evangelist John records only one instance of the raising from the dead—that of Lazarus. Perhaps there were many other persons raised from death by the power of Christ during his earthly life, but if so we have no record of these cases. Only those were given which best accorded with the purpose which each evangelist had in view in the writing of his Gospel.

¹ In the author's volume entitled “The Preeminence of Christ,” published by F. M. Barton, Cleveland, Ohio, there is a sermon on “The Raising of Lazarus.” Thus the series on the raisings from the dead by our Lord during his personal ministry is completed.

It is always an extremely difficult matter to write an accurate biography; but few such biographies have been written during the centuries. We are familiar, of course, with Boswell's "Johnson." We are also familiar with Trevelyan's admirable life of his uncle, Lord Macaulay. There are a few other excellent biographies, but all literary men recognize the fact that the writing of biography is extremely difficult. I venture to say that no writer ever condensed more meaning into a single phrase than did the Apostle Peter in the tenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, when he said of our divine Lord, "Who went about doing good." In that phrase he epitomized the life of the Lord. Let that phrase sink into your thought; let it translate itself into the volume which it suggests. It brings at once before our minds the picture of our Lord going about morning, noon, and night, day after day, and month after month, doing good. This phrase gives us the picture of our Lord going about with benedictions dropping from his lips and manifold blessings from his hands. Wherever he went homes were brightened, hearts were cheered, lives ennobled, and earth, to some degree at least, transformed into heaven. No more beautiful phrase than that was ever written as descriptive of our Lord's bountiful and benedictory life.

Let us take that thought into our minds in connection with the miracle which forms the subject of discussion this morning. If the order of events is

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given correctly in our common version, yesterday our Lord was at Capernaum, and there raised from illness the servant of the centurion. To-day we see him at Nain, as he raises from death the son of the widow. Yesterday he healed the sick; to-day he raises the dead; and every day and everywhere he goes about doing good.

The distance from Capernaum to Nain is probably twenty-four or twenty-five miles. Perhaps Jesus went part of the way by boat, sailing to the southern end of the sea of Galilee, and then passing down the Jordan Valley to the point where the wadies of Esdraelon slope down to the valley. Traveling in this way Jesus could easily reach Nain about the middle of the afternoon, and so would be present at the time indicated in the account of the miracle. But even though the journey were taken on foot all the way from Capernaum to Nain, there would be no difficulty in reaching the latter place in the evening, and it is well known that funerals usually took place among the Jews toward evening. We have thus brought to our notice two interesting and instructive processions near the rock-hewn tombs perhaps to the west of Nain. Leading one procession was the Lord of life and glory, who was that day to open the gates of death and to deliver a young man from the power of death and the grave. Leading the other procession was the dead young man followed by a multitude of sympathizing friends and neighbors. The whole scene was one of remark-

able beauty and attractiveness. It was the early springtide in Galilee and the whole land, we may be well assured, was clad in garments of beauty. The air was melodious with the songs of birds and fragrant with the odor of flowers. Christ was at this time at the very height of his popularity. This was the first year of his ministry; the deadly opposition which afterward developed had not yet been aroused. The Pharisees and other leaders opposed to him had not yet come into open conflict with him; and he had not yet sifted his followers by applying to them the severer tests of his later ministry. His popularity was now great, and it was daily growing greater. A new day apparently was dawning for Israel; our Lord had a large place in their appreciation and affection. The result was that crowds followed him on that spring morning as he journeyed toward Nain; the multitude was enthusiastic, admiring, and adoring. The hopes of the people were high regarding the new day that had come to Israel and regarding also the high character of this new leader; it must be admitted, however, that their conceptions of Christ were often erroneous and sometimes false to his spiritual claims and character.

We thus behold the two processions meeting near the gate of the city of Nain. It was the custom of the Jews, the Greeks, and the Romans, to bury their dead outside of their cities. The case of David among the Jews was an exception to the ordinary

rule. Which of these processions shall yield to the other? Ordinarily among the Jews all considerations gave way before a funeral procession. Circumstances, however, are different on this particular occasion. Holding these approaching processions in mind, we glance for a moment at the city of Nain, which was the home of the sorrowful widow who is an object of special interest in one of these processions. Nain means pasture or gracefulness. It was a town located about four miles southwest of Mount Tabor, and about, as we have already seen, twenty-four or twenty-five miles southwest of Capernaum. It was picturesquely situated on a low mountain spur of Little Hermon, where the hill descends into the plain of Esdraelon. It was once a town of considerable extent, as it had walls and gates; it now consists of a cluster of ruins of about twenty wretched mud and stone dwellings or huts with low doorways. It has an attractive fountain, and this fact has had much to do with the continuance of the town to the present. The traveler to-day gazes upon a scene widely different from that presented by Nain in the days of our Lord. Now the rich gardens of that day are no more; the fruit trees are also gone. A painful sense of desolation is now over the entire scene. On the left rise the hills behind which Nazareth is embosomed; and southward lies Shunem, and yonder is the plain of Jezreel.

We stand near our Lord as the processions ap-

proach each other and we strive to take in the entire scene.

CHRIST'S OBSERVANCE OF THE WIDOW.

Our attention is directed in the first place to Christ's observance of the widow in her sorrow. As we observe this woman we are reminded of the sorrowful days in her life which preceded the sad event in which she is so prominent an actor. We think of the long struggle in her home to restore to health her son, who has now passed into the realm of the dead. All efforts that could be made were in vain. The best medical skill of the hour had doubtless been employed. The most earnest prayers of the most godly people in Nain had been offered. But all was in vain. The angel of death has done his dire work; and now the last sad offices have been performed and the body is laid out according to the custom of the time, not in a coffin such as was used by the Egyptians, but on a bier—perhaps a wicker-work basket—and the procession starts for the place of burial. Jesus observed with the utmost tenderness this sorrowful woman. Her case was peculiarly sad; she was sorrowing for her only son. Nothing can surpass the descriptions of grief for an only son that are given us in various Old Testament scriptures. In Jer. 6 : 26, we have the phrase, "Make thee mourning as for an only son, most bitter lamentation." In Zech. 12 : 10 we have the words, "They shall look upon me whom

they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him as one that is in bitterness for his first-born." In Amos 8 : 10 we have the words, "And I will make it as the mourning of an only son, and the end thereof as a bitter day." We can readily understand somewhat of the intensity of this woman's grief, and of the powerful appeal which that grief made to the sympathetic heart of our divine Lord and Master. We observe, also, that our Lord deeply sympathized with this woman in her sorrow. With two dashes of his brush the evangelist Luke paints the picture of this woman on that sad day. Tradition has told us that Luke was a painter. Probably the tradition arose from the fact that he has given so many graphic pictures of scenes which he has described. It would be difficult, if not impossible, in two strokes of the brush to paint a more complete picture of profound grief than Luke has given us in this narrative. In those two touches he has revealed his genius as a writer. Raphael, by a single stroke, even with a piece of chalk, gave unmistakable evidences of his artistic skill. With a sweep of his hand in the studio of Angelo he made a perfect circle; the moment Angelo entered and saw it he said, 'Raphael has been here.' No other artist, probably, in the world could have made that circle with a single sweep of his hand so perfectly as did Raphael. Raphael virtually wrote his name in making that perfect circle. Luke has written his name

and has given us unmistakable examples of his unique genius in the picture he has painted of this sorrowful woman. When he described her as being a widow he gave the complete stroke to the picture. This was not the first funeral in which she was the chief mourner. She had learned to lean on the strong arm and brave heart of her boy; and now he is taken from her. This was the sorrowful scene which moved the compassionate heart of our loving Lord.

CHRIST'S SYMPATHY WITH THIS SORROWFUL
WOMAN.

We are not surprised that it should be added in the narrative that "he had compassion on her." Sorrow evermore appeals powerfully to the sympathetic soul of our divine-human Lord. Christ's heart was deeply touched and his sympathy was powerfully aroused. It is most blessed to us that we have a Saviour like Jesus Christ. I have learned in these recent years to know Jesus better than I ever knew him before; to me now his face is winsomely beautiful, his voice is divinely melodious, and his hand is graciously tender. We have a Saviour mighty as God, a Saviour who is God; we have a Saviour gentler than a mother, a Saviour who has a mother's heart. You observe also in the narrative how his compassion manifested itself. No one had addressed him, no one had made any appeal to him for sympathy or for

help of any sort. In the case of the daughter of Jairus messengers went to Jesus to solicit his help; in the case of the centurion's servant friends begged the intervention of Jesus. But in the case immediately before us, not one word, so far as we can discover, has been addressed to Jesus appealing for his compassion and help. He takes the initiative under the promptings of his own loving heart. He not only cherishes profound sympathy for this sorrowful woman, but he expresses that sympathy in tender and appropriate words. We see him stepping forward and personally addressing her in the words, "Weep not." She must have been greatly surprised when a stranger thus broke in upon her deep and silent grief; she may even for a moment have considered his address as intrusive. She has been paying little attention to the procession of which she is a part, or to the other procession approaching in the opposite quarter. But the moment she is addressed she must have looked up wondering and startled. We can imagine her asking within herself the question: "Who is this thus addressing me? Who intrudes upon the sacredness of my sorrow?" But as she looked into his face so radiant with light and love, and into his eyes so gentle and kind, she knew at once that no common intruder but a loving and sympathetic friend had asked her this compassionate question. "Ah, broken-hearted woman! You have wept bitter tears; be not weeping now; He is come who can wipe away all tears from every

eye." As a pastor these words deeply move me. I often hesitate to address those who are in sorrow. I know that my warmest words seem cold, my kindest thoughts seem cruel, and my heartiest hand-grasp seems indifferent. But when Jesus said, "Weep not," power to wipe away the tears of sorrow went with his words. He could stem the fountain of grief; his words not only expressed the sympathy of his heart, but with them there went power to still the throbbing hearts of those who mourned. Already he anticipated that time when "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away."

CHRIST'S RECOVERY FROM DEATH OF THE WIDOW'S SON.

Our Lord's sympathy was translated into action for the removal of the sorrow with which he sympathized. The mother need not mourn longer for her son as dead, he is so soon to be restored to life. We read that our Lord "touched the bier." He was heedless of purely ceremonial observances; he feared not pollution arising from contact with the dead. He was the Lord of life and the Master of death, and as such he hesitated not a moment to touch the bier. This is a moment of deepest interest. How startled both processions must have been! The tension was great; it was beyond the power of

words to express. They who bore the young man on his bier "stood still." They felt the presence of a divine Personality. It is a breathless moment. Our Lord, as we may well believe, in a calm, clear, quiet tone said: "Young man, I say unto thee arise." For a moment the suspense is greater even than before; for a moment all watch with speechless and almost breathless interest. What next shall happen? Has there appeared One who has power over death and the grave? Has a voice spoken which will echo through the chambers of death's dark realm? Is death now to be dethroned and dis-crowned? After the lapse of the centuries we also listen with breathless interest to the command given by Christ and wait with high hopes for the result. What is that result? The inspired narrative answers our question: "He that was dead sat up and began to speak." Behold this young man rising from his bier in obedience to the power of Christ! What a marvelous moment was that! How startled this young man must have been! We can well imagine that he asks: "Where have I been? What has happened? Who are these people standing about me? Why does my mother so weep? Who is he who with authoritative tones has addressed me?" Now the young man begins to speak. What does he say? Not one word of the strange experiences which may have come to him in the realm of darkness and death. No more did the daughter of Jairus, nor Lazarus, the brother of Martha and

Mary, speak on their return to life of what they may have seen or heard during their sojourn in the realm of death and the grave. We can imagine that this young man speaks words of sympathy toward his mother, and of gratitude, love, and adoration toward Jesus Christ his divine deliverer from the power of death.

This same Christ is present in this audience this morning. He is commanding you, men and women, to "Arise." In his name I repeat his command, "Arise from the dead and Christ will give you life." Have you, men and women, been born again from the death of sin? Why then are your lips dumb? Have you no words to speak in praise of your Deliverer? Did you speak one word for Jesus last week? Did you last month? Did you last year? Have you not been silent when you ought to have been voiceful? Have you not been cowardly when you ought to have been heroic? Shall you not from this time forth speak brave, loyal, and loving words for Him who has called you from darkness to light and from death to life?

It is most touching to read that Christ "delivered him to his mother." What a moment that was for this joyous mother! Every true pastor envies Jesus this marvelous power. Mingled majesty, grace, and mercy marked him in his relation to the young man on the one side, and to the glad and grateful mother on the other side. Jesus is now proving himself to be the "Resurrection and the Life." He

is incarnate compassion employing absolute power to wipe away a widow's tears and to comfort her sorrowful heart. Every pastor longs to possess, in some degree at least, this divine power. Often a pastor would give the wealth of the world if it were his to give back a sick daughter to her mother. He would weep tears of blood if he could restore a wayward son to his father. The greatest joy in life is to be able, with God's help, to raise men and women from the death of sin to the life of God, and joyously to restore them to their parents. I appeal to you who are still strangers to Christ and to God to come to-day to your Father's heart and home. I appeal to you, men and women, that you strive to echo the mighty voice of Christ in calling wanderers back to him. You do not wish in heaven to wear starless crowns; you do not desire to stand in the presence of Jesus without some proofs that on earth you have won wanderers to his feet and to his heart.

Beautiful is the act of restoring this young man to his mother as a promise, pledge, and proof that the day is coming when all the dead shall hear the voice of Christ as the "Resurrection and the Life," and shall come forth from their graves to be restored to one another in family life and love. This is the joyous hope which we are all permitted to cherish as we look forward to that glad day when death shall lose its power, and when Christ shall march forth in triumph with the keys of death and hades suspended from his girdle.

THE EFFECT OF THE MIRACLE UPON THE PEOPLE.

Great fear came upon all. They glorified God and affirmed that a great prophet had risen in Israel. When men are redeemed by God's grace, God is abundantly glorified. When men become new creatures in Christ Jesus the whole world about them becomes new; the sun shines with a new brightness, the flowers bloom with additional sweetness, and the birds sing with a melody never known before.

They might well testify that a great prophet had risen among them. He who could deliver from the power of death was great indeed. Elijah and Elisha, by the power of God, brought men back to life; this they did, however, as the result of great effort and of earnest prayer. They agonized before God and struggled in the presence of the dead to bring life back from death. But Jesus, as the Master of life and death, uttered one authoritative word and the young man sat up. Jesus could call the daughter of Jairus back to life from her bed in the house, and the son of the widow of Nain from his bier in the street, and Lazarus, the brother of Martha and Mary, from his grave. Humanly speaking, we have here an ascending scale of difficulty, but all difficulties vanish in the presence of the divine Christ who is Lord of death as truly as he is Master of life.

Oh, that God through my lips would speak to

men and women in this audience to-day saying to them: "Arise from the death of sin and speak words of testimony for Christ as divine Saviour and Lord." Fathers, have you dead sons? Mothers, have you daughters who are strangers to Christ and the great salvation? Are there wayward daughters and prodigal sons in this audience? Oh, then let me beseech you to-day to hear the voice of Jesus and to begin the Christian life! Then, fathers and mothers, your children will be doubly yours because you and they have become God's children by a new creation. O wandering boys and girls, come back now to Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. Then there shall be joy in heaven over repentant sinners, over those who have been translated from darkness into light and from death into life. Thus the joy of heaven will be experienced on earth through the light and love and life of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour.

VIII

THE DYING LAD AND THE LIVING WELL ¹

Text: And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water: and she went, and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad drink.—Gen. 21 : 19.

FOR several years it has been in my mind to preach a series of Sunday evening discourses during the heated term on the wells, fountains, and springs of the Bible. Never before, however, have I attempted to carry out this long-cherished purpose. It has seemed to me that no season of the year could be so appropriate for such a series of sermons as that now contemplated as the summer season. We shall hear in this series of sermons the sweet music of the splash and the gurgle of the water. We shall see the crystal stream flowing from these open wells, springs, and fountains. We shall see the cattle with their heaving sides come to dip their noses into the crystal stream that their heated bodies may be refreshed. We shall see weary people coming with their whole families at times, and sometimes as individuals, that their thirst may be quenched, their

¹ On consecutive Sunday evenings during the summer season the author preached on wells, fountains, and springs of the Bible. All the sermons, however, were not reported; otherwise they would have appeared as a separate volume. The author takes the liberty of suggesting similar courses to his brethren in the ministry.

bodies refreshed, and their spirits revived. It is difficult for us in this northern clime to appreciate fully the importance attached in Oriental countries to fountains, springs, and wells. Our climate is too humid for us to understand fully this importance. Water with us is too abundant for us to appreciate it as do those living in Oriental lands. With Eastern people water is a luxury. They become expert as judges of good water. There are shops in Constantinople where nothing but water is sold, and the prices vary according to the springs from which it is brought. In those countries and in earlier times battles were fought for the possession of fountains; forts were erected in order that this tribe or that might retain possession of a well for which the tribe had bravely fought through bloody wars. It was common then and it is common still in wars, if the enemy is forced to retreat, to fill up the wells with stones, with sand, and sometimes with the dead bodies of animals. No regard for others kept from such outrage. Instances are on record in recent history even where this practice has been resorted to. We know too, that the Turkish government has a treaty with certain Arab tribes not to fill up the wells with stones or sand. These Arab tribes receive from the government a certain amount of money and a number of garments each year as a bribe that they shall not fill up these wells along the route of Mohammedans pursuing their journey to their sacred places.

A STRANGE STORY.

The text selected for this evening brings before us a strange story of primitive times and ancient manners. Hagar and Ishmael on the one side, and Abraham and Sarah on the other, are the chief characters to be introduced. We know that the word Hagar, which is pure Hebrew, means a stranger, and we know also that she became an inmate of Abraham's family although a native of Egypt, and the name continued to be applied to her after she had been in the patriarch's household and was no longer a stranger. Perhaps the name was given to her after the family had emigrated to Canaan. She was formerly one of the female slaves given by Pharaoh to Abraham during his visit to Egypt. She thus became Sarah's maid and was to a great degree under her control. From her servile condition in Abraham's house she has risen into immortality because so closely associated with the history of this ancient patriarch. By an unwise expedient Sarah thus gave unexpected honor to the Egyptian maid; but the elevation was too great for Hagar. Her head was turned by the dizzy height to which she was exalted. Her promotion led her to treat her mistress with disrespect and even insolence, and Sarah in turn manifested toward her maid all the peevishness, petulance, and envy of which an angry woman's nature is capable. Sarah doubtless repented of her rash act, and she certainly endeavored

to put all the blame upon Abraham himself. Abraham seems to have given her almost unlimited power in these critical circumstances, and in what followed faced unpleasant results.

FAMILY DIFFERENCES.

It is still true in countries where polygamy is permitted that the principal wife has authority over all the other wives. Some commentators believe that Sarah even resorted to corporal punishment, but the word which gives that suggestion is capable of a more lenient interpretation. Curiously enough from this supposed interpretation Augustine drew an elaborate argument for inflicting civil penalties on those whom he deemed to be heretics. In any case Hagar finally determined on flight. Perhaps her intention was to return to her relatives in Egypt; she certainly went in the way leading to that country. This path led her to what was afterward called Shur. She had to traverse a tract of sandy country and was exposed to many trials on her journey. In this lonely region while waiting by a fountain to replenish her supply of water the angel of the Lord met her, gave her encouraging promises, and commanded her to return to her mistress. As the result of this heavenly visitation the place was afterward named Beer-lahai-roi, "the well of the visible God." Hagar returned to the family of the patriarch and her child was named Ishmael, meaning "God hath heard." In these two names she em-

bodied the experiences of that sad hour in her checkered life.

A CHILD OF PROMISE.

After the lapse of fourteen years from the birth of Ishmael, Isaac the child of promise is born. Three more years, as it is supposed, pass and the festival of the weaning of Isaac is held. Ishmael is now a boy, according to the best interpretation of the narrative, of seventeen years of age. He appreciates fully his changed relations to the family of Abraham and to the promised inheritance. Doubtless he is also conscious that Sarah's affection is now lavished upon another and that he is the object of her neglect, if not of her dislike. At this festival Isaac is dressed in the sacred and symbolic robe indicative of his claim to the birthright; he was also formally recognized as the heir of the tribe. It was and is the practice in the East that the son of a slave or secondary wife is always superseded by the son of a free woman, though much younger than the child of the bondwoman. All these changed relations Ishmael now understood. He disturbed the peace of the festival by mocking the son of Sarah. We know not the nature of his conduct, but the word translated "mocking" is a word of varied meanings. Probably here it can be best represented by some form of wanton teasing, by gestures and remarks peculiarly calculated to annoy Isaac and to enrage Sarah. Perhaps he reflected on Sarah's great age;

it is certain he resorted to some of the many ways in which the boy of larger growth can enrage the smaller boy, and thus that boy's parents, and especially the mother. Nothing could satisfy Sarah from that moment but that Hagar should be driven from the family.

Sarah's conduct was that of an ambitious and peevish woman. Hagar was, according to the customs of the country, Abraham's lawful, though secondary, wife. She ought not to have been given up to the caprice and jealousy of a fierce woman, such as Sarah then was. She had been guilty of a culpable expedient, then of disobedience to Abraham, and finally of irreverence toward God. We are not called upon to justify the conduct of Sarah even though she occupies so honored a place in Hebrew history. Doubtless she intended that the expulsion of Hagar should be equivalent to some form of legal repudiation or divorce. We cannot rightly understand her purpose except we see in it the determination to exclude Ishmael by a legal act from all share in the inheritance. This is the true significance of the spirit she showed and the plans which she inaugurated. This explanation throws light upon Abraham's unwillingness to carry out the purpose of Sarah. Her thoughts were now fixed exclusively on Isaac; she considered Ishmael as a dangerous rival and she determined to punish him and his mother. But for Ishmael Abraham cherished feelings of paternal regard, and he was much

grieved at Sarah's unholy temper and unrighteous conduct. Not until God indicated his wish was Abraham ready to co-operate in Sarah's plans. There is of course a deep religious truth, a profound gospel mystery in these providences. This truth the Apostle Paul teaches when he sets before us this whole history as an instructive allegory.

THE UNFORTUNATE OUTCASTS.

We now see Hagar and Ishmael cast out, and we cannot but feel that Sarah is too imperious, too precipitate, and that she has acted in a manner unworthy of her as a noble woman and as the wife of Abraham. Doctor Parker expresses the thought which almost all readers of this narrative have cherished when he says that our first feeling is that Hagar and Ishmael were most cruelly used. We must not, however, suppose that Abraham dismissed them without proper foresight as to their journey. God was also in the whole narrative disposing Hagar to go quietly of her own desire and Ishmael to yield his will to that of his parents. Had Hagar resisted, the story would have degenerated into a mere quarrel between jealous women. But God was controlling all these events for fulfilment of his promise and for the establishment of his church. Our hearts go out in tenderness toward Hagar as she starts upon her lonely journey in the wilderness. Sarah is left as the mistress of the home, and Hagar goes out as a wanderer in the wilderness. Isaac is

the beloved child of promise, and Ishmael goes out in weakness and loneliness on his long journey and strange career.

We are greatly indebted to the painters and poets for our conceptions of Scripture narratives. To Milton rather than to the Bible many are indebted for their conceptions of Satan, and of angels, of heaven, and of hell; but the painters are often teachers of error rather than of truth. In a famous painting in Dresden of the expulsion of Hagar and Ishmael, Abraham, Sarah, and Isaac are in the background, and Isaac is represented as very little younger and smaller than Ishmael; but we know that Ishmael at this time was at least seventeen years old and about fourteen years older than Isaac. According to the customs of the time there really was no cruelty on the part of Abraham in sending the mother and boy out on their journey after he had furnished them with bread and water sufficient, as it was supposed, to last them until they reached the next well.

GREAT STRAITS AND DELIVERANCE.

We go out with them on their desert journey. They are traveling over a plain of sand and stones. Here and there are some scattered shrubs of thorn and occasional forms of other vegetation. But the sun burns fiercely as its rays fall on these lonely travelers. To be without water in a burning desert is a condition of indescribable misery. It is said that

the eyes become inflamed, that the tongue and lips swell, that strange sounds are heard, and that the brain finally becomes dull and dizzy. A more perfect picture of distress than that of this mother and son it would be difficult for us anywhere to find. We can well imagine the bitter cries and flowing tears of this heart-broken mother; we can also hear the groans of the famishing boy. The hopelessness of the case seems to be complete. Apparently there is no ear to hear, no eye to pity, and no hand to help. Humanly speaking, their case is simply desperate. They seem to have missed their way in the wilderness, and now burning with fever, parched with thirst, and apparently deserted of God and man they sink in despair.

But God who feeds the ravens and who watches the fall of the sparrow has not forgotten this mother and son in their wretched condition. With a true mother's heart Hagar cannot bear to see the sufferings of her child; she therefore lays him groaning, panting, and dying under one of the shrubs, while she at the distance of a bow-shot sat over against him in her loneliness and sorrow, lifting up her face in anguish as her tears copiously fall. The angel of the Lord now appears for their deliverance. He directs them to a fountain which they had not discovered, hidden as it was by the brushwood. From this fountain they draw refreshing draughts. They fill the water-skins and mother and son are graciously revived.

LESSONS.

From this ancient story practical lessons for daily life can be learned. We too are travelers over a desert waste. This world is not our home. There are times when on us, as on Hagar, the sun beats with scorching heat; there are times when our water, like hers, is spent, and when for us as for her there is apparently no helper. God is training us by these wilderness experiences. Only as we tread rough paths with brave hearts can we gain strength for noble deeds. Only as we manfully bear the cross can we triumphantly wear the crown. Sorrow when sanctified refines, ennobles, and exalts daily life. Trial when bravely borne develops character and trains us for worthy achievement. Let us never lose heart in life's journey. God will never leave nor forsake those who put their trust in him.

We may learn as a second lesson that appropriate supplies are near at hand. It is evermore true that "man's extremity is God's opportunity." How glorious is it to read that "God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water"; how blessed to know that "God heard the voice of the lad." Nothing is said expressly of any formal prayer which Ishmael offered; he probably simply uttered his needs in sobs, in sighs, and groans. His suffering condition was itself a voice to the compassion of God. Many a prayer is only a groan. Many a voice is only a tear. God hears the groan and sees the tear, and

one day those groans will be melodious music and those tears richest jewels in the thought of God. God is not dead, he is not blind, he is not deaf. Near Crete there was an image of Jupiter without ears. That was an appropriate representation of a heathen god; but our God has ears to hear, a heart to feel, and a hand to help. There is no wilderness so lonely as to deprive us of his presence. Oh, no, Hagar, the lad will not die but live; thou thyself art the object of God's thought and the subject of God's fatherly care. With the angel of God out of heaven we say, "What aileth thee, Hagar, fear not for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is." See her now lifting up the lad! See her gazing upon the well of water! See her giving the lad the inspiring draught! Have good courage, O men and women, for God's well of needed supplies is near at hand! If Hagar had but looked a little farther she need not have cast away her boy in sorrow and have thrown herself down in despair. Help was near did she but know, had she but looked. Blessed is the well which furnishes supplies for our great temporal and spiritual need!

A third lesson is that for Hagar and for us the supply is abundant and free. There was sufficient for the needs of herself and her son, and for the needs of thousands besides. For us the water of life flows full and free. On the last great day of the feast our blessed Lord stood and cried saying, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink."

He was himself a well of water for every thirsty soul. Before the record of revelation is closed the Lord himself again appears saying: "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will let him take the water of life freely." To-night as the servant of God I invite you to this fountain of living water. You need not die but live. Behold the flowing stream; arise, drink, and rejoice. To your lips I now put the cup, knowing if you but drink of this water you shall never thirst again; for Christ hath said: "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

IX

THE SUITOR AND MAIDEN AT THE WELL

Text: And the damsel was very fair to look upon, . . . and she went down to the well, and filled her pitcher, and came up.—Gen. 24 : 16.

WE have to-night a charming story of love and marriage in ancient times. We are much impressed with the deep regard which Abraham had to the word and promise of God in all his family relations. The death of Sarah gave Abraham an increased anxiety concerning the future of Isaac. Isaac is now forty years old, and it is surely fitting that the heir of the promise should be settled as the head of a family of his own. The chapter from which the passage is taken shows us how important the record of this marriage is in the mind of God. It is one of the longest chapters in the Bible, and it is occupied with the account of the marriage of Isaac. Whatever belongs to the establishment and extension of God's kingdom is important in God's eyes. A mere literary critic would condemn the Bible as a literary production because of the prominence given to an incident which he would suppose might be related in a few words. But God's thoughts are not those of the ordinary literary critic.

In the early portion of the chapter we see Abraham binding the chief servant of his house by a solemn and obscure form of oath to seek a suitable wife for Isaac. Only once besides in the Bible is a similar kind of oath described; that occasion is where Jacob requires the same ceremony from his son Joseph. The history of the Hebrew people does not seem to indicate that this was the customary form of administering oaths. It is a form, however, which would seem to bind all future generations to preserve the sanctity of the oath and to strive to secure in actual experience the promises thus made. Abraham was one hundred years old when Isaac was born, so that Abraham is now one hundred and forty years old. It is quite probable that the servant chosen for this delicate and difficult duty was Eliezer, although his name is not given in the connection. Abraham could not bear the thought of having Isaac marry any of the daughters of the people among whom he sojourned. They had indeed been sufficiently kind to Abraham, but he must have been sensible of the fact that they were alienated from God. Should Isaac marry one of these daughters there was danger of the introduction of idolatry into his family. God had a definite purpose in giving the land to Abraham and to his posterity; and should idolatry be introduced into the chosen family that divine purpose would seem to be overruled. Abraham was called by God to go from the Chaldean idolaters. Shall he now give his consent

to the marriage of his son with the idolaters of Canaan? Should Isaac so marry the abominations of the heathen would be almost invited, and so would become inevitable. There was more likelihood that the idolatrous wife would pervert him than that he would convert her. A careful study of the narrative shows clearly that Abraham was not influenced by a worldly policy, for nowhere in the account is any reference made to riches or earthly honors.

The conduct of Abraham at this point is an admirable pattern for Christian parents. The attractions of rank and fortune are now to many Christian parents irresistible. They seem willing practically to sell sons or daughters for filthy lucre and for social honor. Caleb was willing to give his daughter to the hero who should capture the city of Debir. His conduct seems at first thought to be unworthy of him as a father, but we see that it really was marked by both piety and patriotism. Many so-called Christian parents to-day offer their daughters not to the man with the brave heart, strong arm, and sharp sword which he wishes to use for his country and his God, but rather to the man either with a big bank account, or with some faded and worthless foreign title. It is to be hoped that the time will soon come when the proudest ambition of an American woman will be to become the wife of a noble American citizen, and the mother of worthy American sons and daughters. What permanent happiness

can we expect with a husband or wife who is not in sympathy with God and true religion? How can we love truly, if we be genuine Christians, those who openly oppose the Lord Jesus, whom we have enthroned in our hearts as our Saviour and king?

THE MESSENGER.

The next paragraph in the chapter, verses ten to fourteen, shows us the servant on his journey. Abraham did not wish Isaac himself to go. There was a possibility that if he found a wife in a distant country he might be disposed to make that country his home. The servant, as we see, takes with him ten camels and "all the goods of his master." Doubtless Abraham gave minute directions regarding the outfit and the departure of the servant. Sending this cavalcade was quite consonant with Oriental customs when an expedition of this sort was to be undertaken. Doubtless one purpose of an imposing retinue was to make a favorable impression on the minds of the maiden's relatives; it was important that they should be impressed with the extent of the possessions of Abraham and Isaac. Had the servant gone alone and taken no proofs of his master's wealth, it is clear that his statements regarding the same might be doubted.

We know that the servant went to Mesopotamia, that is to say, Syria of the two rivers; the Greek word signifies the country between the rivers. It is believed to be the region lying between the Eu-

phrates and the Tigris. The servant made his camels kneel by a well of water without the city at a time when the women would naturally come out to draw water. We know that water is generally drawn in the cool of the evening or the morning, and that drawing it is one of the heavy duties usually performed by women in Eastern countries. A similar duty is still performed among the Arabs, and also in India where women, without distinction of rank, perform this service. In Turkey and Persia it is said that only the poorer women engage in this servile employment. When the Bedouins pitch their tents but a small distance from the wells, the water is not brought by camels, but by women who carry it home on their shoulders and backs. The simple maidens of these patriarchal days, Eliezer well knew, would come to the well to draw water; even the high-born damsels of the land were not above this kind of service. Eliezer, if he were the servant, offers an earnest, childlike prayer that God would send him god-speed and would indicate to him the woman chosen to be the wife of Isaac. His prayer has become a part of classic music, and is beautiful whether read in the simple language of the Bible, or heard in the lofty strains of poetry and music. The choice of a wife for Isaac, who is the heir of promise, is a matter of greatest moment. It is a subject in which God is deeply interested. The old servant has an eye for feminine beauty; he also has a practical appreciation of the other qualities

desired for the wife of Isaac. He desires a woman of attractive appearance, one of a gentle nature, and one who enjoys the approval of God.

PRAYER ANSWERED.

Even while he is speaking the answer comes to his prayer. A damsel, beautiful to look upon, approaches the well. The critical taste of the old man is entirely satisfied. She holds her pitcher upon her shoulder as she goes down to the well. It would seem that this well had a descending staircase. Wells so furnished for convenient approach are still known in the East. The grand well of Cairo, known as "Joseph's Well," is said to have a descent of one hundred and fifty feet by a staircase six feet wide. Troughs of stone or wood are sometimes found near the wells, but it is not uncommon to make a hollow in the sand, cover it with a skin, and then fill this sack with water. The servant approaches the beautiful maiden, and asks for water to drink. She does more than he asks, for she offers to give drink also to his camels. The servant is represented as wondering and holding his peace while he gazed upon the maiden performing this menial service. He is debating whether or not the Lord has made his journey prosperous. Doubtless she had servants of her own, or employed some of his to aid her in her arduous task. It is to be hoped that Eliezer gave her a helping hand if his servants did not aid her. A little less wondering on his part and a little more

chivalry would have been quite in place. But in Oriental countries still men often are satisfied to gaze and admire while women wait and work. No men in the world surpass American gentlemen in courtesy and chivalry toward women. Doubtless as you ride in street cars and see men sitting while women are standing you may be disposed to doubt this remark, but I feel sure that if women oftener expressed appreciation for the courtesies of a seat, such courtesies would more frequently be extended.

We now have Rebekah revealing herself in answer to the servant's questions; she is the daughter of Bethuel and the sister of Laban. Beautiful to look upon, she is also of a worthy and historic family, and is as charming in character as she is attractive in person. Knowing one of the avenues of approach to the female heart, the wise old servant gave her a golden ring and two bracelets of gold. The translators of the common version have had great trouble with this ring. They call it an earring, but surely a present of one earring would be a strange act on the part of Eliezer. Without doubt the gift is a ring or a jewel for the nose. The gift was intended as an expression of appreciation for her kindness to a stranger, and at the same time to impress her and her relatives with the wealth of his master. There being no inns in the country the servant accepts the hospitality of her family. It was easy for the family to be cordial in their invitations when it was learned that this servant represented a wealthy master. We

can well imagine with what excitement Rebekah hastened to tell the story of that day's happenings. It was a suggestive, beautiful, and solemn moment in her life. Strange fancies are in her brain; all her dreams may now turn into realities. What does the future hold in store for her? Who is this unknown suitor for her hand? Wonderful moment is that when a woman is asked to be a wife! She becomes when about to be a bride the queen of the home, and every member of the family waits to give her regal honors.

CORDIAL WELCOME.

Abraham's servant receives a royal welcome. Laban, the brother of Rebekah, now appears upon the scene. Some have supposed that Bethuel was dead because Laban takes so active a part in the events of the hour. From what we know of Laban's subsequent life we can well believe that he is deeply impressed with the proofs of wealth of the unknown suitor represented by the aged servant. The camels are cared for and the highest acts of hospitality according to Eastern customs are performed for the aged servant and his retinue. Beautifully does the old servant state his errand. He declared that he would not eat until he had told his story. He was certainly a faithful steward. This charming narrative deeply impresses us with his unswerving devotion to his absent master. He prefers the honor of that master to his own necessary food. Every

true servant of God ought to cherish and manifest a similar spirit. We are the representatives of God. We are seeking a bride for Jesus Christ. His honor ought to be dearer to us than the food which perishes. David had similar feelings when he exclaimed, "I will not give sleep to mine eyes nor slumber to mine eyelids until I find out a place for Jehovah, a habitation for the God of Jacob."

We here enter on the closing portion of this interesting narrative, the account of the return of the servant with Rebekah and Isaac's reception of his bride. It is indeed a beautiful story. The evidence of divine providence is so marked that the family of Rebekah give consent to her departure. Rebekah herself seems to have no decision in the case, except as regards the time when she shall leave her home to be the bride of the unseen grandee; this is the only instance, according to the narrative, where the exercise of her choice is permitted. Her nurse, Deborah by name, as we afterward learn, went with her. The companionship of the nurse was quite in harmony with the customs of that day and of our day in the Orient. This nurse would remain as her confidential adviser and her faithful attendant. We know that the nurse finally died in the service of her mistress. With entire harmony with the spirit of the times is the blessing which is given as Rebekah departs, the blessing of a boundless offspring and power over all national enemies.

Our thoughts are now fixed upon Isaac, who was

at the historic well known as Beer-lahai-roi. This well, the well of the visible God, has already come before us in sacred story. For a time he was dwelling by this memorable well. Here he was waiting in expectation of meeting his beautiful bride, and while waiting there he went out into the fields at the close of the day to meditate on all God's dealings with him and his family. It was the tranquil hour of twilight—just the time when the soul is most disposed for quiet thought and devout contemplation. He could not have been in a more suitable place or in a more fitting frame of mind to welcome his approaching bride. Well is it when marriage is entered into in the spirit of earnest thought and devout prayer. Only such marriages may expect to receive and to enjoy the blessing of Almighty God. There is little wonder that the newspapers of our day are filled with accounts of infelicitous marriages and of broken hearts when one remembers the spirit in which this solemn relation is so often entered. Well is it to recognize with the deepest earnestness that “a prudent wife is from the Lord.”

THE CHOSEN BRIDE.

Beautiful is the conduct of the charming Rebekah as she approaches her divinely appointed husband. Isaac was walking, and it would have been a breach of Oriental propriety for her to remain on her camel while he was on foot. Doubtless the entire company alighted and walked to meet Isaac, taking

Rebekah into the presence of the bridegroom. It is customary still in the East to alight when one is riding if a superior approaches. With becoming modesty and sweetness of demeanor Rebekah covers herself with a veil, expressing her submission to her husband, and at the same time concealing the confusion which she experienced. Tender are the words here given regarding Isaac and his affection toward Rebekah—"and he loved her." It appears that Isaac was the only one of the patriarchs who had no opportunity to exercise a personal preference regarding the choice of his wife. He had never seen his bride until she stood unveiled in his tent as his wife. All the more appropriate therefore is the statement here, "and he loved her." The joy which he now experienced was a compensation for the sorrow felt in the loss of his mother. Probably there was no formal ceremony in connection with the statement, "and she became his wife," other than his taking her thus in the presence of God and before witnesses as his divinely chosen bride.

LESSONS.

Lessons have been suggested in the progress of the exposition already given, but a few more may be briefly named. First, we have in this chapter a beautiful illustration of God's providence concerning his people. This providence, according to the ordinary classification, is both general and special. Strictly speaking, however, there are no general

providences. All God's providences are particular. Here we see that he cares for individuals, that he directs the choice of husbands and wives, and that he sanctifies the marriage relation. Secondly, we may learn to imitate Abraham's reasonable solicitude regarding the selection of a wife for Isaac. Marriage with one of the daughters of the Canaanites might have blighted his whole life. It is marvelous that parents will so often sacrifice the comfort of sons and daughters on the altar of Mammon. God is too often left out and marriages are a matter of mere bargain and sale.

Thirdly, as Abraham's servant had God's glory in view he expected and received divine direction. His prayer to God is marked by great simplicity and confidence. He leaves the issue with God. In all our ways we are to acknowledge God, and then may we expect that he will direct our paths. A halo of glory gathers around his marriage. It is mentioned in the prayer found in some of the prayer books, and frequently offered at the marriage ceremony. This circumstance gives a glamour of poetry and almost a halo of sanctity, to this historic incident. But it is not the most appropriate prayer for such an occasion. The subsequent conduct of Rebekah toward Isaac makes the prayer quite inappropriate. That conduct cannot by any reasonable interpretation be justified. Nevertheless the meeting of Isaac's faithful servant and the beautiful Rebekah at the well will live forevermore in the world's heart.

The story will always be heard as a sweet strain of music mingling with that of marriage-bells, and the gentle Rebekah meeting her chosen husband will remain in the world's thought as an ideal picture of a modest bride sweetly and joyously giving herself to the man chosen of God as her husband.

X

STOPPED WELLS REOPENED

Text: And Isaac digged again the wells of water, which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father; for the Philistines had stopped them after the death of Abraham: and he called their names after the names by which his father had called them.—Gen. 26 : 18.

THIS text brings before us an interesting incident of this olden time. We are brought into the society of characters whose names are familiar to the race as representatives of the patriarchal period. We live over again the simple life of that primitive period. We find, however, even here in this ancient time and in this childhood of the race the passions, ambitions, disappointments, and jealousies which are characteristic of the stirring life of our own day. The Philistines were jealous of Isaac. He was too prosperous to suit their desires. Our prosperity almost inevitably arouses the envy of our neighbors; and envy of this character invariably proceeds to inflict injury. No man will be envious of you when everything goes badly with you, but the moment prosperity smiles upon you, jealousy and wrath arise and find place in the hearts of small-souled neighbors. Such neighbors will drag you down if they cannot themselves go up with you. Many business

men know only too well the meaning of this envious spirit. Professional men have had similar experience from those in their own profession. The ministry is not free from some degree of jealousy on the one side, and of suffering on the other. It is humiliating to make this confession, but the facts warrant it in its strongest form.

FAIR ESTIMATE.

Isaac does not appear always to the best advantage in the chapter from which this text is taken, but we ought not to judge him, or other men, simply by certain portions or chapters in their lives. Dr. Parker has well suggested that if we were so to judge men they would appear either as too good or too bad. No man is quite so good as he appears at certain times in his life, and perhaps we may say with equal truth that no man is quite so bad as he appears at certain other times in his life. Isaac was certainly an abominable man when he lied to the king of the Philistines, but when he goes out well-hunting he appears in a much better light, for while he was guilty of falsehood toward a living king he was full of tenderness toward the memory of his dead father. We ought to judge men in their entirety. We know that men will sometimes perform acts that are beautiful and saintly, and yet afterward these same men will act in a manner that is well-nigh satanic. We are warranted, therefore, in saying that no man is as bad as he sometimes seems to be, nor so good as

at other times he seems to be. Every true Christian is better on the inside than on the outside; every unconverted man is worse on the inside than on the outside. Every true Christian is like the gold in Solomon's temple; the farther in you went the purer was the gold.

We see that Abimelech wished to drive Isaac away because of Isaac's prosperity, and also in order to secure the valuable wells which Abraham had digged. Isaac showed a kindly disposition in not fiercely resenting Abimelech's opposition. He might have pleaded the covenant made with his father, but being a man of peace he waives dispute and submissively retires "to the valley of Gerar," which territory was either beyond the borders of Abimelech's possessions or at a distance from his capital. Isaac re-digs the wells which Abraham had digged and which had been filled up. We know that the filling up of a well was a common mode of opposing an enemy. A good well was a possession of immense value, and often in the predatory wars of those days it was common, in taking vengeance on enemies, to fill up the wells. The Philistines by filling up these wells in a time of peace were guilty of an act of gross violation of the usual treaties among tribes and nations.

A DUTIFUL SON.

Very beautifully does Isaac show his peaceful disposition in digging the wells again, and his filial

affection in calling their names after the names given them by his father. Wells in many of these countries are geographical monuments, and they are valuable to the people in this respect as well as for their water. Wherever Abraham went he improved the country by the digging of wells; and wherever the Philistines followed him they injured the country by destroying his improvements, and especially by filling up the wells. Tender thoughts, doubtless, came into Isaac's heart when he remembered how years before, his father Abraham had dug and named these wells. Memories of this kind would make the water doubly sweet to his taste; thus filial affection co-operated with necessity in unstopping these wells. It was an act of commendable affection on his part to give them once more the names bestowed upon them by Abraham; these names were also memorials of the divine favor, so that Isaac manifested a proper spirit toward God and toward his father in repeating the names which the wells formerly bore. Some years ago when in the Highlands of Scotland, at the early home of my father and mother, I took great pains to visit a certain spot on the shores of Loch Tay. Kneeling on the pebbly beach, I leaned forward and took full draughts of the clear and sparkling water of that Highland loch. Many times on that spot my father when a young man had satisfied his thirst from this water. I had often heard him describe the lake and the river as it flows through the beautiful valley until it empties

into the sea where the terrible Dundee railroad disaster occurred a few weeks before I visited the spot. Feelings somewhat similar to those cherished by Isaac were in my heart as I drank the water from this lake.

A KINDLY MAN.

There was on the part of Isaac marked loyalty and equal love toward his father. He would honor his father by repeating, emphasizing, and continuing the names which his father had given to these wells. He wished also to avoid all strife. He would not indulge in the hatred which sours the heart, distorts the countenance, and embitters the life. Isaac's name means laughter, and although the name had no special reference to these incidents, yet it was in harmony with his kindly character. It is an unspeakably sad thing when a man's disposition makes him bitter toward his fellow-men, and at the same time despondent and morbid toward himself and his family. Such a spirit takes out of the voice all its music, gives the hand a coldness of touch, and makes the entire man miserable in himself and unwelcome among his neighbors. Such a spirit injures him who cherishes it more than it hurts him against whom its bitterness is expended. One loves to think that Isaac maintained the sweetness of his disposition amid these disappointments and exasperations. We see by the narrative that he had dug two wells and had been driven away from both of them, but

that he still maintained gentleness of nature and kindness of conduct. Surely he would have been justified, if any one can be, in manifesting some righteous wrath because of the treatment he had received. It is unspeakably sad when men give way to the spirit of bitterness, to the morbidity of pessimism, and necessarily, to some degree, of infidelity. Weary work it was digging new wells; but not half so bad in its result as cherishing the spirit of hatred which so many entertain to their own wretchedness, and which they manifest to the wretchedness of others. Blessed are the peacemakers! Happy are the men and women of sweet tempers! We ought to put down that black and hideous hatred which takes all that is loveliest out of our own souls and which blackens all that is fairest in our Father's world. There are still wells enough that are beautiful even though some of our wells have been refilled. There are wells in the church, in the home, and in the heart; from these let the clear and sparkling water of peace and good-will toward men ever flow, making music which is the echo of the song sung by the angels on the night the Christ was born.

WELLS AWAITING REOPENING.

I stand before you to-night to perform a service similar to that performed by Isaac in that remote country. There are wells which existed in the days of Abraham, and even in the days of Adam, which have been partly filled up and some of which are

well-nigh stopped. It is my purpose now to name, and if possible, to unstop some of these wells. I ask you first of all to think for a little of the well of Revelation. This is one of the most significant wells ever opened up among men. Men needed a well opened at the throne, even at the heart of God. The light of nature was real light, but it was only twilight. It was good so far as it went, but it fell far short of banishing our darkness and illuminating our pathway. The word of God never makes little of the light of nature. In the Nineteenth psalm God's handiwork in the heavens is noted and honored; but when we come to the seventh verse of that psalm our attention is directed to the "law of the Lord," and we feel at once that we are standing upon firm ground, and that we have come into a new atmosphere. Thoughtful men, even among the heathen—men like Socrates and Plato—who made the most of the light of nature, most desired fuller light than nature could give. God recognized this need and granted an abundant supply. There are men and women who are longing for additional light now, and only as they come to the Bible, the revealed word, and to Christ, the incarnate Word, can they receive the light for which their hearts long. The word of God comes to us as one of the richest blessings of our Father in heaven to the children of men.

The pipes through which this water flows are human, but the fountain is divine. This revelation

is not less valuable because it comes to us through human channels. If God is to communicate with men he needs men through whom the communication can be made. The Lord Jesus, who is the incarnate Word, was human as well as divine. The perfection of his humanity is one of the best proofs of his divinity. The Bible, as the revealed word, like the incarnate Word, is both human and divine. Many persons have argued as if the human element in the Bible exposed it to unfavorable criticism. As well might they object to the human element in the Lord Jesus. The presence of that element makes him and the Bible more perfect as the manifestation of the will of God to the children of men. Christ took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham; so the Bible took not on itself the characteristics of angelic writers, but of men who were moved upon by the Holy Ghost.

Never was there such a fountain of revelation as this; it is next to the incarnation of Christ, the fullest manifestation of God ever made to men. It has been partly stopped up. Men have said that they did not need a revelation from God. They have endeavored to dishonor the Bible and to hurl it from its high place among the books of the world. To-night I would open this well that you may drink and be refreshed. Let the water flow to-night from this divine well, water which comes clear as crystal from the very throne of God.

We shall strive also to unstop the well of Salva-

tion. This well is one of the most blessed of all the wells ever unstopped. The word salvation is the sweetest word that men or angels ever heard. It cannot be translated into any language without imparting to the word chosen to represent it something of its own sweetness and beauty. I am sure that the word makes music in heaven. But this well has been partially stopped. False doctrines, ecclesiastical rites, meaningless ceremonies, prayer books, and numerous creeds have well-nigh filled up this well. Men have talked learnedly of the councils of the church, but the more we know of some of them the less we care to know. At the Council of Nicea grave and reverend divines acted at times like average city politicians at a ward caucus. Many of them were unworthy to represent the church of Christ. All creeds are simply compromises between truth and error. It is often far more difficult to interpret them than to interpret the Scriptures on which the creeds are supposed to be founded. The history of creeds shows that they are divisive rather than unitive. We never can have church union on the basis of the historic creeds. I do not wish to give men theological stones when they are crying for bread—the bread that came down from heaven. We need the gospel in all its simplicity, beauty, and fulness.

We shall not to-night discuss the doctrine of election. But I stand here to say whosoever will, let him come and take the water of life freely. It

has been well said that there are two words found in connection with the Christian life, "whosoever and whatsoever." Whosoever is on the outside of the gate showing that whether we be rich or poor, black or white, red or yellow, learned or ignorant, we may enter. Whatsoever is on the inside of the gate teaching us that whatsoever we ask in the Master's name and for our soul's good we may receive. This glorious well I open to-night that all may drink of its refreshing and blessed waters.

I open also the well of Consolation. We have received salvation from God, we also need consolation in the many trials of life. At this moment some are sick, others are watching beside the sick, and still others are bearing other heavy burdens. Do not go to these burdened hearts with your cold and worldly maxims. Do not tell bruised souls of your philosophical remedies. The bleeding heart needs the healing touch which gives virtue, peace, and benediction. We read that Cicero was overwhelmed with grief at the death of his daughter Tullia. He loved her with pure and parental tenderness. In his sorrow he resorted to pagan philosophy for comfort; he even wrote a book into which he put all the maxims of consolation which pagan religion and philosophy afforded; but these maxims had no power to cure his grief. He resolved to erect in the gardens of Rome a monument to the memory of his daughter. Oh, if Cicero could have heard the words of the Lord Jesus, "Come unto me, all ye that labor

and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"; if he could have heard Jesus say, "Fear not, only believe"; if he could have heard the wonderful Paul say, "All things work together for good to them that love God"; if he could have heard the same Paul again declare that "Our light affliction which is but for a moment worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," he would have found comfort indeed. The well of consolation men have endeavored to fill up with their stoicism, their agnosticism, their atheism; but still their hearts cry out for God, for the living God. The soul can never find rest except in the bosom of Jesus Christ. I thrust in my crowbar and pry out these obstructions. See these crystal waters flowing? This is the water suited to the need of every soul. Are you in sorrow to-night? Accept Jesus' sympathy. Cast your burden on the Lord. For every grief he has the appropriate medicine. For your death he has life; for your sin he has forgiveness. Earth has no sorrow which heaven cannot heal.

I unstop also the well of Sanctification. This well has been filled up by ungodly acts, by impure thoughts, and by misinterpretations of Scripture. Justification is a completed act; sanctification is a process. Often this process is long and sometimes painful. When we submit to God there is an instantaneous forgiveness of sin, but in the Christian life there may be a prolonged struggle against evil. Our blessed Lord in his great prayer on behalf

of his disciples said: "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth." We have here a blessed grace, sanctification; we have also a glorious instrumentality, "thy word"; and we have here also a blessed definition, "thy word is truth." Heaven is already begun in the heart of all true believers. Its peace is in the life, its joy on the lips, and its light in the face of true Christians. Drink deep from the well of Salvation, from the well of Consolation, and from the well of Sanctification. There is music in the word well; there is joy in the drawing of the water. O well-diggers, amid earthly disappointments and ambitions, come to this water. Hear the word of the old prophet, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters"; and hear the words of a greater than Isaiah, the words of the Lord Jesus on the great day of the feast, "If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink." And, still later his words, spoken from his throne in heaven, "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

XI

MARAH—THE WELL OF BITTERNESS

Text: And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah, etc.—Exod. 15 : 23-26.

THE joy of the children of Israel as they stood on the shore of the Red Sea, recognizing their deliverance from Egypt and the destruction of their foes, was unspeakably great. Their minds were filled with grateful and reverential fear. Their souls were under the influence of a perfect delirium of joy, and that tumultuous joy finds expression in the triumphal ode of Moses. It was a song so lofty that the roll of the sea and the thunder of the sky would have been its fit accompaniment. Doctor Murphy calls attention to the fact that nations do not need a high degree of culture in order to express in measured flow of winged words their joyful thanksgiving. All primitive tribes, whether among the Hebrews or Greeks, or in the Highlands of Scotland, have showed great skill in chanting strains of emotion in simple measure, but with poetic beauty and patriotic fervor. Primitive peoples have as instruments of music at least the harp and the pipe; and these instruments presuppose modulations of the human

voice, which after all is the most wonderful of all instruments. The artless poetry of many primitive peoples has made their names immortal. Music is evermore the handmaid of patriotism and piety.

We do not wonder that the sublime miracle God had wrought should have called forth from Moses a sublime song. This is one of the oldest and one of the noblest of triumphal odes of which we have any knowledge. It does not lose its honors even when compared with the epics of Milton, or with any of the grandest poems of our more modern singers. It burst in beauty and grandeur from the soul of Moses under the inspiration of the Almighty. Moses sang loftily without any consciousness of poetic genius, and without any thought of immortality. No poet of our day could suggest changes in thoughts or words which would add to the beauty of this magnificent ode. Moses asks no favors from the literary critics, even when compared with Isaiah, with Tennyson, with Longfellow, or with Browning. He stands in triumph on his own lofty peak of Parnassus. This song rises and falls like the sea in its grandest movements. A wonderful moment was that on the shore of the Red Sea. The refrain was led by Miriam, the leader of the choir of the women. We may well suppose that it was uttered first by a single voice, then all took it up until the song rolled over the mighty host in its divine sublimity. Miriam was well known for her skill in speaking to God for men, and to men for God. With timbrel and dance she led the

way and the other women followed. We know that women danced in groups by themselves and the men by themselves. This was a sacred dance. A dance was almost always a part of ancient religious services. Geikie tells us that even now the young women of Egypt greet the rising Nile with sacred dances, and that the Indians of the East employed sacred dances as a part of their worship; so likewise did the Romans. The Greek Church still, in connection with its Easter services, retains traces of this ancient sacred dance. The dancing dervishes of Turkey and Central Asia are well known. Dancing is closely akin to singing; indeed, it is but the extension of the thought of beating time as now practised among ourselves. The Hebrew word for a religious festival really means a circling dance. To hold such a dance was the privilege which Moses asked of Pharaoh when he sought permission for the people to go on a three days' journey into the wilderness.

NOBLE WORDS TO LOFTY MUSIC.

The song of Moses inspired the genius of later poets. Indeed it is carried over into the book of Revelation, and those who stand on the sea of glass mingled with fire, harping with their harps, are represented as singing the song of Moses and the Lamb. We have in this song a fine example of noble words wedded to lofty music. We ought to make more of musical instruments in modern re-

ligious services. The drum and fife and the trumpet and cornet ought oftener to have their place in our solemn services. We should consecrate to God all instruments of music. We have been too timid in the introduction of the timbrel and flute and other instruments of music. Perhaps the Salvation Army may give us valuable suggestions at this point. We have made our services too cold, too prosaic, too dead. From this joyous company, chanting their triumphant song on the shores of the Red Sea, we may learn useful lessons in the religious work of our own day. No doubt as the waves broke upon the shore bearing with them horses and horsemen, destroyed in the Red Sea by the power of God, the refrain would break out still more clearly, "Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea."

THEIR HARDSHIPS.

In the first place, we may notice their hardships as they begin their journey. They may not linger too long upon the shore with its oasis of greenness and its triumphant music. They must begin their journey; they must abandon for the moment their joyful mood and leave the flowing springs, the palms, the acacias, and the tamarisks. The journey must be renewed. We must not linger long over triumphs or defeats. The disciples could not build tabernacles on the mount of Transfiguration because down in the valley were a poor boy and a

broken-hearted father who needed help; so the children of Israel must leave the seashore and begin their march into the wilderness. They must leave the wells of Moses and tread a rough pathway under the scorching sun. As they begin their journey they experience unexpected hardships.

The distance from the wells of Moses to Marah is supposed to be about forty miles. The route lay along the Gulf of Suez over a desert region, gravelly and stony by turns. For a time the host would see the blue waters of the gulf on their right hand, and on their left a mountain chain stretching before them as they advanced. After traveling a few miles they would enter an extensive desert plain, and now they would march under glowing skies without a cloud, and over a desert road hot and hard to the feet. Nothing would meet their gaze except perhaps a raven, a beetle, or some other dweller in those lonely regions. Soon high sand-hills near the coast would shut out the view of the sea. Theirs was a dismal beginning of a new national life. Travelers tell us that at dawn the atmosphere is mild and balmy, but soon after sunrise the fierce heat makes traveling almost impossible, and at noon the eyes become blind, the skin blisters, and the mouth parches under the scorching sun. The air reflected from the barren hills comes to the face like a blast from a heated furnace. In such circumstances the want of water is bitterly felt, and the people began to murmur. It is easy for us to con-

demn their murmurs, and we may become sarcastic when we contrast the sudden change which had taken place. Their singing on the shore is soon changed to their sighing in the wilderness. As Doctor Hamilton expresses the thought, the Red Sea minstrels have become the wilderness murmurers and mutineers. Finely Mendelssohn in the opening passages of his "Elijah," represented the despair of a whole people perishing from thirst. Their anguish expressed itself at first in solemn, restless murmurs, then it gathers terrible power, and finally it bursts forth in heart-rending cries of agony.

We must, however, be considerate of the people as we remember their difficulties and sufferings. Travelers who pass over the same country to-day fully appreciate the sufferings of the hosts of Israel. These Israelites were not accustomed to this kind of self-discipline. They were indeed accustomed to hardships in Egypt, for Egypt was governed then, and is to some degree now, by the lash. Then it was not uncommon for masters even to break the bones of their slaves; but the children of Israel never were trained in self-discipline. They had not the opportunity of developing self-reliance, nor of cultivating individualism as they came out of Egypt as a mass and crossed the Red Sea in a rush.

THEIR GREAT DISAPPOINTMENT.

Let us notice, in the second place, their great disappointment. It is now near the close of the third

day of their weary march, and off in the distance they descry the rough outline of a lofty peak of mountains. That rugged mountain suggests cool glens and rippling waters; and but for that sight they might have been utterly discouraged. It cheers them on, and forward goes that mighty, weary, panting host. Nearer and still nearer do they approach this mountain range; the outlines become more definite and the people see the dark verdure which indicates the presence of tamarisk and palm and water. Hope almost becomes fruition, for they well know that water must be near, and onward under the inspiration of this assurance they march. They have traveled about forty miles from the shore of the Red Sea. That distance was much greater in that day than in our day, as now an ambitious traveler can cover the distance in a day and a half, or in two days at most. The evening of the third day is approaching. Let us glance a moment at the spot which now is reached. Here indeed are wells. Travelers tell us that there are seven of these wells. One of them is found in a basin ten feet broad and six feet deep, and in that basin there is water to the depth of three feet. It may have been so then. How their eyes dance with joy as they approach! How the laggards that have fallen into the rear begin to quicken their steps! The faces of all are lighted with gladness. On they press. Their weary limbs have new vigor as their hearts beat high with hope. Watch them as they hasten their journey! Doubtless they

were again ready to take up the song which they had so gladly chanted on the shore of the Red Sea and say, "Sing unto the Lord for he hath triumphed gloriously." See them as they hasten to the sparkling waters.

Now they stoop to drink, but as they touch the water they find it is bitter to the taste, it is poison to the throat; it is perhaps death to the body! It is "marah"—bitterness! To the children of Israel especially was this bitterness dreadful. They had been accustomed to the sweet water of the Nile; and we are told that those who for a long time have been accustomed to that water regret nothing so much as its absence when they travel to distant countries. No people in Oriental countries so suffer from the want of good water as do the present natives of Egypt. It is said that even the camels will not drink the waters of Marah unless they are especially thirsty. Man has, as have no other creatures, the power of adaptation to circumstances. He can live in frigid or torrid zones, and he knows how to dress according to his surroundings. He has elasticity and faculty of adaptation, but he never can entirely overcome the sad effects of disappointment. Disappointment finds him ungirded for its presence and power. Disappointment struck home to the hearts of the distressed people on this occasion. They had just put the cup to their lips; mothers had been cheering their children for miles on that weary march with

the hope of refreshing water, and now neither mothers nor babes can touch the waters of Marah. Theirs was a deadly disappointment. The word marah has passed into all languages where the Bible is known as the symbol of bitterness and disappointment.

After all, the experience of the Israelites is but a symbol of our experience to-day. The world is full of wells of Marah. In every sphere in life disappointments and bitternesses are sure to come. God has his wise purposes in all these experiences. When our hearts turn rightly to God our wells of bitterness may be changed into fountains of gladness.

THEIR DELIVERANCE.

Observe, in the third place, the deliverance experienced by the children of Israel. We are told that they murmured. Did you ever think of the composition of the word murmur? It is simply mur, mur, mur, representing in the form of the word the sound expressive of discontent. There is no reason why this word should stop with two murs; it might go on indefinitely multiplying syllables. Doubtless it often did so prolong itself. The word was coined from the sound made by persons in disagreeable moods. The people were especially unreasonable in murmuring against Moses. What had Moses done? Did he have a private well from which he might drink? Was he not subject to the

inconveniences which they suffered? How was he to blame? Was he God that he could open wells for them in the wilderness? He might have spoken to them in great bitterness. He might have thundered against them for their ingratitude and stupidity. He needed great patience. They whimpered like disappointed children. They forgot the great services of their heroic leader and they showed how unstable human creatures can be. Their present distress made them forget their former hallelujahs. An unpalatable beverage made them forget the glorious triumphs at the Red Sea.

Moses here sets us an example which we may well follow. The people murmured against him, but he cried unto the Lord. They murmured: he prayed. It is a wonderful blessing when men in high stations can bring their own burdens and those of others to God. The people rolled their burden upon Moses; he cast all his burdens upon God. One in authority, as was Moses, possessing this spirit, can look up to higher authority than human leadership. Blessed are you as teachers, pastors, parents, when you can look to God for guidance in every critical experience! I thank God and I thank Moses for this blessed example. He prayed. What then? "The Lord showed him a tree, which he cast into the waters; the waters were made sweet."

Many questions suggest themselves at this point. Was this result produced by some inherent properties in the tree? Was the selection of this tree arbitrary,

or was it miraculous? Unless we admit that there was some efficacy in the tree itself it is difficult to understand why this particular tree was pointed out to Moses. We know that there are trees and plants which possess properties of this sort. The discoverers of Florida found that sassafras thrown into stagnant waters would greatly improve their quality. It is said that the first use of tea on the part of the Chinese was to improve the waters in their ponds and rivers. We know that in South America there is a shrub called alumbre which possesses curative properties of this general character. It would be easy to give other and similar instances in other countries. We know also that chemical examinations prove that the bitterness of these waters is caused by the presence of sulphate of lime, and that any vegetable substance containing oxalic acid thrown into the waters will precipitate the lime and render the waters comparatively wholesome; but if the result was secured simply by the inherent qualities of the tree it is strange that after the lapse of all these years the Arabs in the vicinity are unacquainted with a tree possessing such qualities. Granting that there was some curative power inherently in the tree, we must still believe that the miraculous power of God was shown in guiding Moses to its selection and in giving it additional efficacy when thrown into the water. In addition to the healing of the water God gave the people a statute and revealed himself to them by a new name.

LESSONS.

There are a few lessons which we can learn from this interesting narrative. First, the way to our Canaan is not free from trial. Those trials came upon the children of Israel while in the way of duty. Had they wandered out of the right path we could more readily understand why they suffered afflictions. This law of life is illustrated in our own experience. We have to march through an enemy's country. Often our pathway is rough and our burdens are heavy. God in this way develops character. Virtue would be impossible if vice were not real. God puts the metal of true manhood into us by giving us fierce trials in our Christian experience. Only thus can we develop our spiritual sinews and muscles. When trial is sanctified our crosses will be as precious as our crowns. The grandest lives are those that had their baptism of sorrow.

Secondly, the true resort in disappointment and sorrow is prayer to God. Great triumphs are often followed by equally great trials; but when trials drive us to the feet of Jesus Christ they increase our strength and ennoble our lives. Disappointments develop character. We may thank God for the prick of truth that drives us to the heart of God. Thirdly, God always has a cure near at hand. Perhaps there is an antidote for every bane in the natural world. Even poisonous plants are near curative plants. Earth has no sorrow which heaven

cannot heal. There is a tree now which can cure the world's bitterest woes. The cross of the Lord Jesus thrown into the marah of sin will make its waters pure and healing to the soul. On that tree the Christ of God died for the world's redemption. Trusting Christ light will come out of darkness, joy out of sorrow, and peace out of trouble. Thus the bitterness of earth may be changed into the sweetness of heaven. Evermore Marah may lead to Elim.

XII

LIVING WATERS FOR THIRSTY SOULS

Text: If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.—John 7 : 37.

THESE words when spoken by our Lord produced a profound impression on all who heard his voice. Some who listened affirmed to their neighbors that Jesus was the prophet to come before the Messiah. Others believed that he was the Messiah himself. A division was thus created among the people concerning the Christ. That division was his safety for the moment, as even those who were ready to arrest him as a blasphemer hesitated because of the strong party which appeared in his support.

The temple officers sent to arrest him were so overcome by the majesty of his discourse that they returned to their masters without their prisoner. They were so overawed by his powerful words that they did not lay hands upon him; and they had no reply to make to the rebuke of their superiors but to say, "Never man spake like this man." The Pharisees in the council were shocked at the disloyalty of the officers who bore the commission of the court. They spoke sneeringly of the inability of the ignorant rabble to pass judgment on these high religious

questions. The voice of Nicodemus was hesitatingly heard in the council in defense of Jesus. He had not the moral courage to speak more bravely, but he uttered an important truth which gave pause to the sticklers for the law, when he affirmed that the law judged no man until he was fairly heard in his own defense. The jealous supporters of the law were thus shown to be breakers of the law.

THE TIMELY APPEAL.

The powerful appeal by our Lord on that interesting occasion has echoed through all the centuries since it was first uttered; it comes down to us to-day with much of its original beauty and power. It is worthy of our most careful consideration. The appeal is powerful because of its peculiar timeliness. The words were uttered on the last great day of the feast. This was the feast of the Tabernacles, and was the closing feast day of the year. This eighth day was celebrated with special pomp and splendor. It was a day of rest from servile labor, and it was prophetic of the glorious Sabbath of the New Testament. The rabbins were accustomed to say, "Whoever has not witnessed these festivities has no idea of a jubilee." This feast was the great Jewish harvest-home; it was celebrated when all the fruits of the earth had been gathered. Within the temple its joyous character was especially manifested. Multitudes assembled morning and evening and the air was rent with voices of

thanksgiving and praise. With the pouring out of the water the voice of holy song rose to its most exultant notes. A vast procession formed around the fountain of Siloam, which sprang up in the interior of the temple mountain. From its flowing waters the priests filled a large golden pitcher. Leaving the fountain they climbed the steep ascent of Moriah, passed up the broad stairs, and entered the court of the temple where the altar stood. One priest poured the water brought from Siloam into one of the two silver basins placed before the altar; into the other silver basin another priest poured wine from the pitcher which he carried. With the mingling of the water and the wine the multitudes broke forth in the most exulting and triumphant songs. The trumpets and cymbals sounded their most joyous notes; the trained choristers chanted with the utmost earnestness the words of Isaiah 12 : 3, "With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation"; and thousands of voices sang the great "Hallel," consisting of selections from psalms One Hundred and Thirteen to One Hundred and Eighteen.

As the booths commemorated the tent-life of the Israelites in the wilderness, so the pouring out of water served to commemorate the miraculous springs which God opened to supply the thirst of his people; but our Lord gave a deeper significance to all these stirring ceremonies. We readily see at what part of the service he uttered his great invita-

tion. The pouring out of water was the central part of the service. Whatever historic significance the act might have it pointed forward to the symbolic outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and to Christ himself as the living water and the open fountain. When the chanting of the "Hallel" had taken place and the people having given thanks, and having prayed that the Lord would send prosperity, silence for a few moments fell upon the vast multitudes. Just at that moment the voice of Jesus was heard throughout the temple uttering the words of the text. It was a marvelous moment. He did not interrupt the solemn and joyous services; for the moment they had ceased and silence reigned through the temple courts. Christ interrupted not those services, but he gloriously interpreted those services. He showed that their full significance was realized in himself and that he was the great Reality, symbolized by the splendid ritual observed on the last day of the feast.

Our Lord took advantage of this great occasion to present himself as the Saviour, whom symbolically they were seeking. The scene was thrilling and dramatic in the extreme. We criticize certain politicians when we call them opportunists, but our Lord was a holy opportunist. He was, in a true sense, a sensational preacher. Just as Wesley and Whitefield took advantage of the great fairs and other public occasions which drew together many thousands, to preach the glorious gospel, so our

Lord took advantage of this occasion to present himself as the water of life. Many preachers seem more anxious to save the conventionalities of the pulpit than to save the people—more anxious to preserve the traditional dignity of sermons than to redeem the lost lives of their hearers. Our Lord's dramatic address on this occasion teaches important lessons to preachers in our day. Many hearers want a preacher whose chief aim is to preserve the traditional proprieties of the pulpit, to disturb no sinner, and sweetly to comfort every saint. Our Lord must have greatly shocked all the sticklers for the proprieties of the feast of Tabernacles when he uttered the glorious words of the text.

THE EARNESTNESS OF THE APPEAL.

Our Lord's great earnestness adds much to the weight of his stirring appeal on this occasion. His soul was deeply moved. The honest enthusiasm of the multitudes in observing the temple ritual stirred a deeper enthusiasm in his soul for their spiritual welfare. He saw that they were mistaking a mere ceremony for true spiritual religion. His great earnestness is shown in the attitude he assumed and in the manner of his speech—he "stood and cried." Our Lord usually sat when teaching. But now in the temple in the midst of the thousands of people present he stood. This change of posture is not without significance. He wished to give unusual emphasis to the words which he uttered. He there-

fore not only stood but he lifted up his voice so that it could be heard throughout the temple, sounding far and near over the vast throng with soft clearness and yet with great earnestness. No one present could ever forget the tones of that voice and the message of that hour. It was a memorable occasion and marked a great step in advance in the history of our Lord's revelation of himself to the world. Oh, that his earnest spirit may fill the souls of his preachers to-day! Oh, that, as true heralds of the cross we may cry aloud in order to tell the divine message and win men to Christ!

Perhaps no scene in our Lord's public ministry is equally wondrous. Here is a subject for a painter of the loftiest genius. Strive to realize this scene: The gorgeous ritual, the impressive rites, the trained choristers, the symbolic pouring out of the water, the pealing trumpets and cymbals, the moment of hushed expectancy, and then the sublime figure of Christ standing before the people, his voice sounding through the temple courts with its matchless sweetness, resistless power, and divine majesty!

INSATIABLE THIRST RECOGNIZED.

An important element in the power of our Lord's appeal on this occasion is seen in his wise analysis of human need. Christ did not need that any man should tell him what is in man; he knows full well the insatiable thirst of the soul that is without God. All the circumstances of the moment combined to

suggest the need of thirsty souls and the supply of living waters. It was autumn; for months the sun had shone in a cloudless sky; for the early rains men were longing then, as they long now for the monsoons in India, after the burning heat of summer. The cloudless sky and the parched earth suggested the thirst of human souls who had never tasted of the water of life.

This insatiable thirst is characteristic of men in all countries and centuries. Without being able to interpret the longings of their own souls, men are really crying out after God. This is the true significance of every pagan rite and of every heathen altar. From the lowest fetish-worshiper to the builders of the altar to the unknown God on Mars Hill men are vaguely and vainly endeavoring to satisfy this insatiable thirst. Men are made for God, and only God can fill the human soul. All the fountains of earth are truly broken cisterns, which cannot really supply water for the soul's satisfaction.

There is the thirst of the intellect. Men are crying out for truth. Sometimes, with Pilate, they ask in sorrow rather than in sarcasm, "What is truth?" Never can the thirst for truth be satisfied until men give their hearts to Jesus Christ, who is the way, the truth, and the life. There is the thirst of conscience. A wounded conscience who can bear! Conscience is a solemn word; it comes from "con," together with, and "scire," to know. It means to know together with some one else. That other

knower is God. The atonement of Jesus Christ is as necessary to the satisfaction of the enlightened human conscience as it is to the satisfaction of divine justice. The wounded conscience can be calmed only by the cross of Christ. Until we have trusted in Christ as our personal Saviour, we cannot say with one of Shakespeare's characters, "I feel within me a peace above all earthly dignities, a still and quiet conscience."

There is also the thirst of the heart; this only God can satisfy. The heart was made to love and to be loved. He is more or less than man who does not wish both to love and to be loved. But only God can really fill the heart with true love. Money, power, honor, pleasure—not anything nor everything this world offers can really fill our hearts, can really quench the thirst that burns in the human soul. God alone is worthy of the supreme love of the human heart. O men and women, listen to the voice of Jesus. He can quench this thirst and give you the water of life which shall be in you a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

THE PROMISE IN THE APPEAL.

Our Lord proved the greatness of this masterful address by the promise of living water for thirsty souls. His voice rings out, saying: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink." Our Lord here promises the living waters of God's heavenly grace. He virtually tells the multitudes that the

water they had drawn from Siloam was but a type of the living water which he now offers. He assures them that those who drink from his divine fulness shall themselves become living springs, blessing all thirsty souls whom they meet.

This is a glorious invitation which our Lord gave in the midst of this magnificent festal rejoicing. It is a cry which resounds throughout the entire Bible. The eloquent and loving lips of Isaiah had sounded it forth: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." In the text our divine Lord appropriates distinctly to himself this glowing invitation of the evangelical prophet. To the woman at Jacob's Well our Lord said: "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." The word first translated "drinketh" in this quotation is the present participle denoting habitual action; but the second word translated "drinketh," is a verb, and is in the tense which in Greek is employed of an act only once performed. We are thus taught that he who drinks constantly of earthly water shall constantly thirst, but he who drinks even once of divine water shall never thirst again.

Before the volume of revelation closes the same sweet note is struck again in Rev. 20 : 17, "Let him that is athirst, come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Our Lord thus

graciously shows his readiness to give living waters to thirsty souls the world over. Christ had given in Galilee an invitation to all that labored and were heavy laden to come to him for rest. In the synagogue at Capernaum he declared himself to be "The Bread of Life." It is true that the text, considered in itself, does not really go beyond these former invitations, but they were given on private occasions or were addressed to provincial audiences. Now, however, our Lord stands conspicuously forth at a great festival in the sacred temple and in the religious metropolis of the nation; he presents himself now to the people assembled at their national festival, and in language of sublime simplicity, surpassing majesty, and gracious entreaty he offers himself as the Water of Life to all thirsty souls. How can this universal and otherwise insatiable thirst be fully quenched? From the lips of the majestic Christ comes the answer. Let us carry his gracious words over the wide earth; let all the generations of thirsty souls hear them: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink."

This is a personal invitation. Our Lord invites us not to rites and ceremonies for the quenching of our spiritual thirst; he invites us to go to himself as the fountain of living waters. Just at this point is suggested the fundamental distinction between Romanism and true Protestantism. Romanism makes the water of life dependent upon various forms of ecclesiastical machinery. It makes the ap-

proach to God through a human priesthood. through the intercession of saints and the favor of the Virgin Mary. It begins with the baptism of an unconscious babe and ends by giving extreme unction to dying men and women, often as unconscious as the babe. True Protestantism approaches God directly and immediately through Jesus Christ.

Hear, O men and women, hear the voice of Jesus saying to-day, "Come unto me, and drink." Thirsty men and women go past all rites, all ceremonies, all traditions, to Jesus Christ himself. Drink and live; then you shall know by a blessed experience that you shall never thirst again, and that this water shall be in you a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

XIII

ESTABLISHMENT AND STRENGTH¹

Text: He made before the house two pillars of thirty and five cubits high.—2 Chron. 3 : 15.

THIS text is part of the description of Solomon's glorious temple. The preparation for the building of this historic temple was patient, prolonged, and prayerful. When completed this superb structure was one of the architectural wonders of the world, and in its spiritual significance it was also one of the great glories of the gospel church. At the entrance of the porch, or pronaos, as we see in 1 Kings 7 : 21, there stood two columns called Jachin and Boaz.

These pillars were not primarily for utility, but their chief purpose was for ornament and as symbols of great religious truths. Their religious significance is suggested by the names they bore: the right pillar was called Jachin and the left Boaz. Putting the meaning of these two terms into two words the words are "establishment" and "strength." They were intended to remind all worshipers that God alone is the giver of all past

¹ Preached Sunday, May 14, 1905. A grateful memorial of thirty-five years of continuous pastoral service in Calvary Church.

mercies, and that on him men must depend for future blessings.

These two pillars in their united length give us a height of thirty-five cubits. We may this morning think of these thirty-five cubits as representing the thirty-five years of the present pastorate. We thus erect a memorial to-day in honor of God who alone gives a church divine strength and permanent establishment. God has been, now is, and ever shall be our true Jachin and Boaz.

MEMORIAL FOR PERSONAL BLESSINGS.

This pastorate possesses several unusual features. It is with profound gratitude that mention is made of the fact that during this entire period the pastor has practically not missed a single Sunday from his ordinary duties because of illness. A valuable inheritance from his stalwart Scotch ancestors is the health which has enabled him thus for so long to discharge his various duties without interruption. With the exception of the summers when he has made visits to foreign countries, he has not taken a vacation from some form of educational or religious work during these thirty-five years. In recent years he has preached or lectured almost daily at Chautauqua assemblies in many States throughout his entire summer holiday.

The Calvary ministry is notable because it is the only pastorate of that ministry; in all probability there will never be another pastorate in that min-

istry. When the work in Calvary Church is done some work may be found as a "Bishop at large" with various parts of the country as a diocese.

For family blessings profound gratitude is constantly experienced and is now heartily expressed. Because of regard for desires which are always paramount, no extended reference is made to her who has been all through these years the pastor's best assistant. In the work of all the women's societies as well as in every other department of church service, her interest has been constant, her service faithful, and her entire influence thoroughly salutary, sapient, and Christic.

Many columns named Jachin and Boaz might be erected in memory of the kindness, forbearance, and magnanimity of deacons, trustees, and other church and Sunday-school officials. All the members of the church, whether official or not, have manifested a kindness out of all proportion to the worthiness of its recipient. Men who are thoroughly alive necessarily differ in opinion. Only dead men are opinionless. Immobility in place and unanimity in thought are apt to be inseparable neighbors; they especially belong to cemeteries. The unity, peace, harmony, and love which have always dominated the counsels and the methods in Calvary Church are worthy of the utmost emphasis and of equal commendation and imitation. This result is due in no small part to the existence of a judicious Advisory Committee. Cases of church discipline that might

have become painfully disruptive if brought without due deliberation before a church meeting have been settled by this committee, and the necessity of church action, with its attendant publicity in most cases, has been entirely avoided. When properly observed the polity of our Baptist churches has all the advantages of a pure democracy combined with the preservative blessings enjoyed by churches governed by a classis, a presbytery, or a bishopric. It is a thousand pities that all Baptist churches do not avail themselves of the benedictive opportunities which wisely conducted advisory committees offer.

GREAT AND VARIED DENOMINATIONAL GROWTH.

When this pastorate began thirty-five years ago the number of members in Calvary Church was two hundred and forty-three, of which number nineteen are still members; the number to-day is two thousand two hundred and twenty-three. During the history of the church the whole number received into the fellowship is five thousand three hundred and four, and in the last thirty-five years the number is four thousand five hundred and thirty-six. Twice goodly numbers took letters from the church to assist in forming new churches in hopeful fields in the city. Calvary is thus an "alma mater," a fostering mother, of worthy children. When this pastorate was begun thirty-five years ago, the population of the United States was, in round figures, thirty-eight millions; the number of Baptists at that time was

about one million five hundred thousand. The population of the United States to-day is approximately eighty millions, and the total membership of Baptist churches to-day, not including several bodies of Christians that are Baptists, but are not in full fellowship with us, is four million six hundred thousand seven hundred and ninety-nine. This is an increase of over three million during the thirty-five years and about one million of that increase was made during the last ten years. Within the period of thirty-five years the population of the country has doubled and a small fraction over, but during this same period the membership in our Baptist churches has trebled and with more than one hundred thousand over. Ours is probably the most rapidly populating country on the globe; and yet the membership of Baptist churches is increasing more rapidly than the population of the country. Baptists have almost no growth from immigration, as Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Lutherans, and especially Romanists have. If the streams of immigration were cut off it is likely that the Roman Church would barely hold its own in America. Baptists have grown more during the last ten years than either the Episcopal Church, of whose percentage of growth we hear much, or the Congregational Church, since each was founded in America. Ten years ago when this pastorate had completed its first quarter century, carefully compiled figures were given as to the condition of the Baptist denom-

ination at that time. It will be interesting to compare the figures of to-day with those given ten years ago.¹

Going back a little over a century we have figures and proportions of great importance. When Washington was inaugurated, the thirteen States which comprised the Union had a population in round figures of three million seven hundred and fifty thousand. The whole number of Baptists at that time was about fifty thousand; then, as now, the larger number was in the South. The second table given² showing the proportion of Baptists to the population at different periods cannot fail to interest every citizen, to rejoice every Baptist, and to inspire every Christian.

WORLD-WIDE, PROVIDENTIAL MOVEMENTS, MAKING FOR CHRISTIANITY.

Since this pastorate was begun in 1870 a new world has been born. We have made enduring

	1895	1905
¹ Ordained ministers	27,090	32,244
Churches	37,910	45,927
Baptisms	205,857	240,936
Total membership	3,637,421	4,600,799
Sunday-schools	22,916	28,966
Pupils in Sunday-schools	1,500,834	2,015,672
Value of church property	\$80,285,034.00	\$101,476,882.00
Contributions to missions, education and Sunday-school expenses	1,138,059.00	3,223,324.80
Total contributions	11,672,691.00	16,823,588.06

² 1784 there was 1 Baptist to 94 of the population,
 1812 there was 1 Baptist to 42 of the population,
 1840 there was 1 Baptist to 30 of the population,
 1880 there was 1 Baptist to 23 of the population,
 1890 there was 1 Baptist to 21 of the population,
 1900 there was 1 Baptist to 19 of the population,
 1905 there is 1 Baptist to 17 of the population.

history with astonishing rapidity. The Franco-German War began two months after this pastorate, July nineteenth, 1870, France formally declared war against Prussia. Napoleon III desired to strengthen his tottering throne by waging a successful war against the hereditary foe of France. Eugenie, stimulated by the pope and her other religious advisers, was largely responsible for this war. Regarding it, she said: "*Cela c'est ma guerre.*" This was indeed her war; it was also her terrible humiliation. Her ignoble husband, the mere imitation of the great Napoleon, the painted semblance of a genuine hero, became a captive on September second, 1870, after the battle of Sedan, the Waterloo of the Second Empire, and Eugenie had to flee to England. She became a widow January 9, 1873. Her only son, the Prince Imperial, was killed in 1879 in the Zulu War. Napoleon, Eugenie, France, the pope, and Romanism suffered a terrible defeat, and Germany, Protestantism, and all the nobler elements of civilization gained a superb victory. As a result of this war Germany was united into one great empire. Italy also, so long divided, became one kingdom; the temporal power of the pope was forever destroyed, and Victor Emmanuel rode in triumph into the eternal city as king of united Italy.

The Chino-Japanese War prepared the way for the Russo-Japanese War now (1905) in progress. In 1894 disorders prevailed in Korea. Japan made these disorders the ground of reviving certain old

claims to rights in that country. China had long claimed suzerainty in Korea. Japan declared war against China August 1, 1894, and a few weeks later concluded an offensive and defensive alliance with Korea. September 18 the Chinese fleet was destroyed at the mouth of the Yalu River. On November 21 Port Arthur was taken. China was soon at the mercy of her victorious enemy. Peking was in imminent danger of capture. April 17, 1895, peace was secured by the treaty of Shimonoseki.

Russia, in placing through France in 1895 a loan of seventy-seven million two hundred thousand dollars to assist China in paying the indemnity to Japan, gained what she doubtless expected would be a permanent foothold in China; and this fact contributed in no small part toward the uprising of the Boxers and the war which followed. The Spanish-American War in 1898 moved forward with a rapidity equaled only by its great historic importance and its enormous significance in relation to civil and religious liberty. Once more Romanism and the pope suffered a terrible defeat; once more civil and religious liberty and all the distinctive principles of Americanism and Protestantism gained immortal honor. Spain was driven out of the Western hemisphere. Once the pope gave all the New World to Portugal and Spain; now neither country owns a foot of soil in the Western hemisphere. On December 10, 1898, the Treaty of Peace was signed between

America and Spain. On February 6, 1899, it was ratified by the United States Senate; on March 17 it was signed by the Queen Regent of Spain; on April 11 final ratifications were exchanged, and soon after diplomatic relations were resumed. The new era in American expansion was one result of this war. Our beloved Republic thus passed from boyhood into manhood, from provincialism into cosmopolitanism, and from continental isolation into world-wide recognition and power. Civil and religious liberty followed the American flag to Porto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines. These events mark one of the great and heroic eras in American history.

The South African War, 1899-1902, was a conflict for supremacy in South Africa between Great Britain and the Boer Republics of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. The war broke out October 11, 1899; it ended in May, 1902. On the part of the Boers it was the desperate resistance of guerilla bands against immensely superior forces. The final defeat of the Boers was inevitable. Careful thinkers must admit that the triumph of the British makes for all the best interests of all forms of civilization, and for the progress of the nobler types of Christianity.

DISTINCTIVELY RELIGIOUS ACHIEVEMENTS.

Since this pastorate was begun, Stanley made his heroic journey of nine hundred and ninety-nine days

across Africa. He started November 12, 1874, from Bagamoyo, near Zanzibar, with three hundred and fifty-six men in his caravan; and he staggered into Boma, a West Coast Settlement, on August 9, 1877, weary in body but intrepid in soul. In the course of seven thousand miles of travel he never met a Christian. When he emerged from that continent with the latest news of Livingston, nine-tenths of inner Africa were unexplored. There is now a chain of missions from Mombosa to the mouth of the Congo. A little over a century ago the Protestant missionary was excluded from the whole Roman Catholic, Greek Catholic, Buddhist, and Mohammedan world.

When this pastorate was begun edicts were posted in Japan against Christianity, edicts which declared that if the Christian's God came to Japan he would pay with his head for his temerity; now religious liberty prevails throughout the land of the Rising Sun. Less than two generations ago Japan did not own a jinrikisha—that interesting carriage designed by Jonathan Goble, an American Baptist missionary; now Japan has four thousand two hundred and thirty-seven miles of well-managed railways. Japan and Russia are seven thousand miles apart by land and a still greater distance by water, and still they are able to wage war in a region which Japan can reach in four days and Russia in four weeks. The Latin countries have greatly lost prestige during the past generation; there is not a country on

the globe to-day dominantly Latin in blood and Roman in faith that is really prosperous.

Reference has already been made to Japan; the country is worthy of fuller mention. The story of how Perry opened the country in 1853-1854, how Townsend Harris and Lord Elgin negotiated treaties in 1858, is familiar. In 1868, two years before this pastorate began, a revolution overthrew the Shogun and feudalism. The calendar of the Christian world was adopted and Sunday was recognized as a day of rest. The march of events was rapid and resistless. In 1871-1873, an embassy went abroad to study Western institutions, and on its return it aroused the nation. The Rev. Dr. Guido Fridolin Verbeck, the learned and consecrated Dutch-American missionary to Japan, was largely instrumental in stimulating this embassy to go on its mission. In 1875 a deliberative assembly was formed; in 1877 provincial representative assemblies were organized; in 1885 the government was formed providing for a cabinet on European models; in 1889 a written constitution was granted by the emperor, and in 1890 the first parliament assembled. Japan thus rapidly passed from medievalism to modernism, from feudalism to an enlightened government.

DEVELOPMENTS CONDUCIVE TO CHRISTIAN PROGRESS.

It has been suggestively said that an atlas of the world is now one of the best prayer books. In

Korea, long styled the "Hermit Kingdom," Christianity is now securing notable triumphs. Until a comparatively few years ago China was as tightly closed against the Christian missionary, except at a few port cities, as when in 1552 the heroic and dying Xavier exclaimed, "O rock, rock, when wilt thou open to my Master?" As late as 1857 a director of the East India Company declared that he "would rather see a band of devils in India than a group of missionaries." Steamships and railways are messengers of the cross; electricity is the swift angel of the Almighty. Men in China, India, and Africa uncovered their heads on the same day with men in America when the body of President McKinley was laid in the grave. King William IV of Great Britain died in 1837, and the news of his death did not reach America for thirty-five days. Queen Victoria died in 1901 at 2.30 P. M., and the afternoon papers in America contained long articles giving full details of the sad event. In 1859 it took one hundred and forty-seven days to go from New York to Shanghai; the journey can now be made in twenty-five days. Steamships have reduced the world to one-third the size it was even fifty years ago, and to one-tenth the size it was when Carey went to India. The Cape-to-Cairo Railway will revolutionize the "Dark Continent." Half the distance of this road is already covered. The Siberian Railway is revolutionizing Russia, the Orient, and the world. In 1872 Jules Verne published his dream entitled "Around the

World in Eighty Days." The idea then was utterly fantastic, but with the aid of the Trans-Siberian Railway the journey now can be comfortably made in thirty-three and a half days. Trains will carry us along the banks of the Burmese Irawadi to Bhamo and Mandalay. It is now very common to make the trip by rail from Jaffa to Jerusalem, and from Damascus, the oldest city in the world, to Beirut. A line will soon run from Damascus to the Mohammedan Mecca, and another will run through the heart of Asia Minor, traversing the Taurus Mountains and the Cilician valleys to Haran, where Abraham tarried, and to Nineveh where Jonah preached, and also to Babylon where Nebuchadnezzar made his famous image of gold. Electricity is a spark from the eternal flame. All the discoveries of modern science are messengers of the Almighty. Wireless telegraphy is changing all the methods of naval warfare; it is also making it easier to believe in the existence of God, and in the possibility of reaching his ear and heart by prayer. The first quarter of the twentieth century will see sublimer results in weakening Shintoism, Buddhism, Taoism, Hinduism, Confucianism, and Mohammedanism, than were achieved during all the nineteenth century.

In our enterprising era no waters are too remote for the steamer, and no mountains are too lofty for the ubiquitous railway. Experienced travelers tell us that it is now possible to go from Glasgow, Scotland, to Stanley Falls, Africa, in forty-three

days. There are now forty-six steamers on the upper Congo, and the British Association for the Advancement of Science is to meet during the present year at Victoria Falls. It was only on January 26, 1885, that the heroic "Chinese" Gordon was barbarously murdered at Khartum, and only five years ago that the brave Kitchener was fighting there the savage hordes of the Mahdi. Now dining and sleeping cars safely run the five hundred and seventy-five miles from Cairo to Khartum. Soon civilization and Christianity will dominate Africa.

WE ERECT TO-DAY A MEMORIAL OF GREAT
REVIVALS.

The great revivals under Dwight L. Moody reached their highest point of efficiency and power during this pastorate. In 1873, accompanied by Ira D. Sankey, he visited Great Britain and Ireland. Through the preaching of the one and the singing of the other the British Isles were shaken by the mighty power of God. In 1875 he held great meetings in Brooklyn and Philadelphia. Never shall we forget those stirring days in New York in 1876 when Henry Varley held his meetings in the great Hippodrome, nor the days somewhat later when similar meetings were conducted under the leadership of Moody. During the period of this pastorate the wonderful revival among the Telugus under the leadership of Dr. John E. Clough occurred. In one day two thousand two hundred and twenty

were baptized, and about ten thousand during one year.

It is difficult to appreciate the fact that during the last generation some of the greatest preachers the church has produced reached the zenith of their power and then passed to the nadir of advancing years, and finally to the end of life. Among these in America was the patriotic, heroic, valiant, and unique Beecher; the stately, eloquent, scholarly, and Chrysostomic Storrs; the spectacular and flamboyant Talmage; the massive and virile John Hall; the puissant, poetic, and loving William M. Taylor; the genial, versatile, and beloved Armitage. But time would utterly fail me to speak of John A. Broadus, Howard Crosby, Phillips Brooks, Martin B. Anderson, Ezekiel G. Robinson, George Dana Boardman, A. J. Gordon, George Claude Lorimer, and a score more in America. Across the sea, not to mention any of the great names in Germany or France, or other countries beyond the Channel, we have the mighty Parker, the genial Stanley, the many-sided Farrar, the learned and eloquent Liddon, the honored Temple, the illustrative and dramatic Guthrie, the peerless Spurgeon, and a score more.

CHURCH CHARACTERISTICS.

The pastor has striven to be loyal to all the distinctive principles of the Baptist denomination; and just because of this loyalty the church has been

broad in her sympathies and constant in her activities. This church has stood for a noble humanism. It has sought to show its love for God whom we do not see by performing practical service for men whom we do see. The pastor has stood up boldly for pure municipal politics and for loyal national statesmanship. He believes also in a true churchism, and he has constantly aimed to exalt the services of public worship by making them stately, ornate, scriptural, and reverent. Twenty years ago he received no little criticism because he wore a robe in the pulpit, and because of the tasteful ritual followed in Calvary Church. But some of his opposers of that day are now among his warmest supporters in both these respects. The church has a warm and loving heart for young and old, rich and poor, and an especially cordial greeting for strangers in New York. This pulpit has never been disturbed by the vigorous discussions in the secular and religious press, and in ecclesiastical conventions, regarding the various questions of biblical criticism which have so greatly agitated many churches and churchmen during the recent *sturm und drang* experience in theological thought. No discussion can really disturb the pulpit whose dominant aim is to discover and declare the truth. Such a pulpit is not asking questions about new theology or old theology, and cares nothing for either as such; it desires only the true theology, whether it be old or new. It knows that truth is the daughter

of God. It cares more for truth than for its own prejudices, more for truth than for all human creeds, more for truth than for all else. Pastor and people now look hopefully to the future. It will be the aim of both to make the remaining years of this pastorate more fruitful in blessing than any years in its past. It is hoped that there will be no pause in the onward march, no self-complacent reliance on past achievements, no indulgence in guilty repose while the call of duty is sounding an advance. We can earnestly say with Browning:

The best is yet to be,
The last of life, for which the first was
made.

Our times are in His hand
Who saith, "A whole I planned"
Youth shows but half; trust God:
See all, nor be afraid.

.
Thou waitest age: wait death, nor be
afraid.

XIV

THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL

Text: For I am not ashamed of the gospel; for it is the power of God unto salvation.—Romans 1 : 16.

THESE are brave words written by a brave man. They stir the blood like the blast of a trumpet. There is in them no sense of fear or failure. The Apostle Paul must often have longed to be in Rome before the providence of God opened the way for his visit. This letter to the church in Rome evoked his noblest powers. In the preceding verses he had declared that he was a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians; both to wise and to foolish. These terms are apparently used as including all Gentiles of whatever race or degree of culture. The apostle here teaches us that the guilt of men is universal, and so the need of the gospel is universal.

He declares his readiness, in harmony with his sense of obligation, to preach the gospel in Rome also. He recognized the fact that Rome was then the mistress of the world, that her emperors were worshiped as deities, and that she was elated with pride because of her great victories and her boundless possessions. It is difficult for us to overstate the greatness and the guiltiness of Rome as the

metropolis of the world and the seat of universal empire. Rome ruled over one hundred and twenty millions of people when this letter was written. The sides of her hills were adorned with superb villas, and their summits were occupied with temples, theaters, and palaces. Nero's "golden house" was the most magnificent palace known to ancient architecture or to modern luxury. To this proud and sinful Rome Paul longed to preach the glorious gospel.

REASONS FOR ABSENCE OF SHAME.

We may be well assured that he had a good reason for not being ashamed of the gospel; his conduct was never reasonless. In this case he clearly and strongly states the ground on which his decision rested, declaring that the gospel was the power of God unto salvation. Let us study his reasons, observing the characteristics of the power of the gospel as they are given us in this text.

The Romans loved power. They represented the greatest military power then known in the world. The Apostle Paul, with his usual courage and tact, meets them on their own ground. In writing to the Corinthians he spoke of the gospel both as the power and the wisdom of God, but in writing to the Romans he limits himself to its characteristic as power. The gospel is not only an example of divine power, but it is the sphere of God's sublimest manifestation of power known among men. The three great nations of antiquity stood for three

great national traits. The distinguishing feature of Hebrew civilization was religion; the chief characteristic of the civilization of the Greeks was art, poetry, literature, and philosophy; and the dominant element in Roman civilization was law, military power, and martial conquest. It was the grasping power of an external government. Wherever the Roman armies were, marching or camping, there, like a mysterious presence, was the dominating power of Rome. All these facts were familiar to the Apostle Paul.

He reminds the Romans that he was the representative of a power vastly greater than that of Rome. He glories in the power of the gospel. He speaks with a consciousness of its imperial glory and resistless might. Others might be ashamed of the gospel, but such was not his spirit. The word which he here uses, which is translated power, gives us our word "dynamite." It is not affirmed that the apostle had in mind the explosive substance to which we give that name, but he uses the Greek word, which best describes the tremendous energy of that explosive substance. He declares that the gospel is "the dynamite of God." When placed beneath all the forms of organized evil it will as surely destroy them as dynamite bursts the rock with its resistless power. Let us rejoice in the fact that the gospel has not lost its primitive power. It is still the mightiest power known among men to save from self and sin, and to lead to holiness and to

heaven. When the pulpit loses its faith in the gospel it has lost its power. God give us unquestioning faith in the old and ever-new gospel of Jesus Christ!

THE GOSPEL DIVINE POWER.

We are now prepared to advance a step; the gospel is not simply "power," but it is divine power, "the power of God." In Psalm 62 : 11 we read that "power belongeth unto God." It is difficult to define power. In any true definition it will be seen that God is back of all force. In a very special sense, however, the gospel is the power of God. It is the highest and holiest channel of the divine power. It is the sublimest and divinest display of God's power known to men and to angels. The gospel is a divine revelation and not a human philosophy. It is both the wisdom and the power of God. It evokes the unceasing admiration of all God's true children. It utterly mystifies all agnostic thinkers. It is the object of sincere inquiry on the part of angels. They are represented as desiring to gaze into the mysteries of God's grace and the manifestations of God's love. The gospel is the masterpiece of the Almighty. In the gospel of Jesus Christ God exhausted himself. It is still today, as ever, the power of God unto salvation.

SALVATORY POWER.

It is a truly healing or saving power; it is "the power of God unto salvation." Power may be de-

structive or constructive; it may be a blessing or a curse. The world greatly needed healing when Christ came into it, and when Paul wrote his Epistle to the Romans. At that time the Roman empire seemed to be in the zenith of its glory. Its military power was universal and it seemed likely to be perpetual. As a matter of fact the mighty empire had begun to decline. Over it the shadows of its night were falling. The days of the noble Augustus had given place to those of the despicable Nero. No real principle of unity but only the bond of external authority held together the different parts of the vast empire. The emperor was deified and men were enslaved; half the population were slaves. There was no true peace, even though the temple of Janus was closed. The old faith in Roman heathenism was gone, and with it went also the severity of Roman dignity and the valor of Roman patriotism.

The culture of Greece and the East inundated Italy and the West; this culture utterly enervated the character of the earlier and sturdier Romans. With this culture came Oriental degeneration and moral degradation. The grossest vices were daily practised. The position of woman was one of neglect or degradation. Political integrity was unknown and the suggestion of commercial honesty evoked laughter. Proud as was the Roman citizen there was despair in his heart. Slaves were crucified for the slightest offenses or to gratify the pleasure

of onlookers. Tyranny and oppression broke the hearts of an otherwise brave people. Tacitus and Juvenal affirm that corruption festered in all ranks of society. The elder Pliny was filled with wonder at the works of creation, but he could find no pleasure in their contemplation because of the unspeakable corruption of social and political life. He considered speedy death the greatest of blessings, and he found it amid the poisonous fumes of Vesuvius. The Apostle Paul's terrific indictment in the chapter from which the text is taken is paralleled by the indignant assertions of Seneca, who compared society to the arena in which gladiators killed one another for profit.

Into such social and political conditions came the gospel of Christ. The whole Roman empire was groaning for deliverance, all classes were crying out for some salutary power. The gospel came with divine healing in its ministrant hands and in its loving words. It came to transform Roman and Greek life. The gospel was the breath of God on the dry bones of Roman despotism and corruption. A new day thus dawned in Roman history; a divine declaration of independence was proclaimed from the palace of Nero to the dungeon of the slave.

The gospel is still a healing and saving power. It transforms society to-day in nominally Christian and in utterly heathen lands. It uplifts and ennobles all classes and conditions of men; it transforms regions of pestilential miasma into paradises of

moral health and beauty. It is performing miracles in the conversion of men to-day vastly more wonderful than any of the material miracles performed by Christ during his earthly life. Thank God the gospel is still the power of God! Nor will it ever lose this power if only it be proclaimed to sinners of every class and color throughout the world.

THE GOSPEL, INDISCRIMINATIVE POWER.

To whom is this gospel the power of God unto salvation? This is a most important question; to it an inspired answer is given—"to every one that believeth." The words "every one" give universality to the possession of this power, when the condition is complied with by the exercise of personal faith. Faith is the channel through which this power flows. Faith is the condition on which it is acquired and possessed. The terms are so simple that many fail to possess this power because they are looking for its acquisition on the ground of their own merits. The divine medicine will not cure the sinful patient, except it be taken on the divine condition. Faith unites us to Christ, as the branch is united to the vine. Faith actually makes us partakers of the divine nature. Faith is the spiritual artery of the soul; through it the heavenly life blood flows. Faith is the eye by which we see the King in his beauty, the hand by which we lay hold of Christ, and the nimble foot by which we run in the way of his commandments.

Without faith it is impossible to please God; without faith it is impossible to render helpful service to men. Faith is the basis of all the great commercial enterprises of the world. Every bank is opened each morning on faith; every check drawn or deposited is an illustration of faith. Faith belongs to the earthly as truly as to the heavenly life. The mighty pyramids, erected in the various Egyptian dynasties, in Mexico, and in other countries, are based on faith. The glorious Parthenon, the highest triumph of Greek Doric architecture, was the product of faith. Faith made the immortal Thermopylae and the memorable Marathon possible. Without faith Hannibal had not crossed the Alps, nor Columbus the seas. Without faith there had been no Magna Charta, no Bill of Rights, no French Revolution, and no American Declaration of Independence. The farmer, as truly as the preacher, lives by faith; the seaman as truly as the missionary. Men who object to faith as a basis of action ought to object to all human enterprises and to all mental activities. Faith is one of God's divinest gifts. It is the divine torch, clearing up the darkness of doubt and illuminating the path of life. It is the pillar of fire which conducts the church of God through the wilderness of the world and into the land of promise and power. It is the secret of all heroic endeavors and sublime achievements. It makes unseen things seen, and the invisible God gloriously visible. It unlocks the treasures of grace

and fills the soul with the promises of God. Its ear is quick to hear God's voice, and its eye is sharper than the eagle's to see God's beckoning hand. The man who has no faith is a helpless dwarf among the heroic giants, who honor God and help men by their loving sympathy and their gentle ministry. Well may we pray "Lord evermore give us this faith."

The only qualifications for the reception of the gospel is the exercise of faith. The Jew believed that he belonged, in a special sense, to God's peculiarly chosen people. He thus became narrow and exclusive, prejudiced and bigoted. All others were Gentiles, and little better than dogs. The Greek also was narrow and sectarian in his racial pride. To him all mankind consisted of Greeks and barbarians. The Apostle Paul was in a noble sense a cosmopolitan man. He rose above racial prejudice and religious bigotry. He was in the true sense of the word a cosmopolitan, a citizen of the world. His blood, birth, and training peculiarly fitted him for this large place in the kingdom of God at that critical era in its history. He found Christianity as the cult of a Jewish sect; he lifted it to the dignity and glory of a cosmopolitan faith. In blood he was a Hebrew, in culture a Greek, in citizenship a Roman, and in faith he was a Christian. He was the best educated man in the college of the apostles, and he did more work as writer and preacher than all the other apostles put together.

He laid hold of the truth that Christ was not only the glory of his people Israel, but was also a light to lighten the Gentiles. But for the cosmopolitanism of the Apostle Paul Christianity might long have remained simply the belief of a Jewish sect. The Apostle Paul delivered Christianity from the bondage of a narrow sectarianism; he lifted it into the glorious grandeur of a sacred cosmopolitanism, emancipating it from local, racial, and national prejudices.

We need the heroic spirit of the matchless apostle at this hour. Racial prejudice and religious bigotry are twin relics of barbarism. In a noble Christism and humanism there is neither Jew nor Gentile, bond nor free, but a blessed oneness in Christ Jesus. The time has come again to ring out these wholesome truths, to wield once more the sword of the Spirit, and to declare that the old gospel is the only hope of this lost world. If the gospel will not save men their condition is utterly hopeless. But thank God it is still the power of God unto salvation!

Away, away over the rocky hills of Palestine went the first preachers of the gospel. The islands of the sparkling Ægean were the stepping-stones for the feet of "The sacramental host of God's elect." With the cross they battered down the hoary evils of Greek culture and of Roman power. On they swept through the valleys of Germany and over the hilltops of Britain. Modern Europe was born of the gospel of Christ. Britain, mistress of

many lands and queen of all the seas, is the child of the gospel, which in the sixth century was preached by Augustine and his monks. But for the gospel our fathers and we would to-day be savages, burning human sacrifices in the valleys of England and Scotland, and in other lands. How dare we deny the heathen nations to-day the gospel which has made the Anglo-Saxon so largely the master of the world? What the gospel did for Britain it is now doing for India, and it has done partly for Hawaii. Hawaii's beautiful salutation *Aloha*, meaning love, has caught a new significance. That salutation is now radiant with the glory and voiceful with the name of Jesus. What the gospel did for Britain it will do for China and its almost unnumbered millions. What it has done for Britain and America it already has done in part for heroic Japan. The day is coming when Japan will lead China, Korea, and Siam into civilization and Christianity.

It will then be seen more fully than is possible to-day, that when Jesus Christ gave the Great Commission he was the foremost thinker of the world. Jesus Christ, and not Socrates nor Plato, not Buddha nor Zoroaster; not Confucius nor Mohammed, taught a religion equally needed by, intended for, and adapted to all men of all castes, all creeds, all countries, and all centuries. This honor belongs to Jesus Christ and to his glorious gospel, which is the power of God unto salvation. The day is com-

ing when Japan's *Banzai* and Hawaii's *Aloha* will join with the Hebrew and Christian "Hallelujah," with the voice of many waters as the sublime accompaniment, chanting with saints and seraphs, angels and archangels, the triumphant chorus of a redeemed universe: "Hallelujah! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!"

XV

STIRRING INTO FLAME GOD'S GIFTS

Text: For which cause I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up (stir into flame) the gift of God, which is in thee through the laying on of my hands.—2 Tim. 1 : 6.

CLASSIC is the story of the friendship of Damon and Pythias—a friendship stronger than death. Equally tender and vastly more spiritual was the love between the aged Paul and the youthful Timothy. This love exercised a mellowing and sweetening influence on the mind and heart of the great apostle. It softened the impassioned vigor of the heroic Paul. Much in his life was truly pathetic. He was a homeless, wifeless, and childless man. The story of his sufferings, loneliness, and heroism, coming across centuries and continents, moves our hearts to-day to unwonted tenderness. He was the chivalrous knight of the Cross. He was the superb ambassador of the Christ. He lifted Christianity from the provincialism of a Jewish sect into the dignity and glory of a universal faith. He turned the tide of history, and gave a new trend to the thought of the ages. Still this indomitable man sweetly surrendered to the love of his youthful disciple, the gentle Timothy.

We behold the apostle now in a Roman prison; he is awaiting the sentence of death. One after another of his earthly friends has disappointed his hopes by leaving him in his hour of need. But although the chain dangles from his hand, his soul glows with love. He utters no threnody; he rather sings a pæan of victory. Noble apostle! Beautiful disciple! Divine Christ, Lord and Master alike of apostle and disciple!

GIFTS WHICH WE ARE TO ENLIVEN.

The words of the text, taken from the last letter of the matchless Paul, are peculiarly solemn and powerful. He is uttering his very soul to the heart of his beloved disciple. His words are a trumpet blast. The best men need frequent reminders of their duty. Timothy was naturally a timid man; he was also somewhat of an invalid. He was brought up with tender care, and he profited by the example of the "unfeigned faith" which dwelt in his mother and grandmother. Paul, with paternal tenderness, calls him "my own son in the faith," and also "my beloved son." There is, however, a tone of gentle rebuke in the apostle's exhortations to Timothy to kindle anew the flame of zeal in his soul.

The gift which Timothy is to stir is the special endowment for the evangelistic work to which he was called; this gift would include his capacity, zeal, and spirit for all his official duties. Perhaps the context implies that the courage of a martyr is also

included. In the former epistle reference is made to the gift mentioned here, and it was there associated with the imposition of the hands of the presbytery. Here, however, it was most natural that the apostle should remind Timothy of his own act of imposition of hands, as Timothy was, in some sense, to stand in the apostle's place and to assume the apostle's labors. Doubtless both parties participated in the ordination service.

THE GIFTS WE ARE TO ENKINDLE.

It is of great importance that we clearly understand what are the gifts which we are indirectly exhorted to enliven. We may well say that we are to stir up the gifts of utterance as witnesses for Christ. All our powers of speech will reach their highest development and their noblest employment when used in testimony for Christ. When the heart is warm with the love of Christ the lip will be eloquent in praise of Christ. The tongue never knows its loftiest use until it chants the name of Christ. Too seldom do we use our powers of speech on behalf of him who lived and died for our redemption. When have you spoken a strong and loving word for Jesus? Our silence must fill saints and seraphs with unspeakable amazement. There is no such theme for masterful eloquence as the love of Christ to men. Better that we never possessed the powers of speech than that we should fail to use those powers to tell the story Christ's redeeming love.

Our pens also should be employed in honoring Christ's name and in winning men to his service. When have you, men and women, written a letter for Jesus? Often by writing loving letters to your friends you can more powerfully beseech them to yield their hearts to God than by any other form of entreaty. The letter will lie upon their table making its mute but eloquent appeal to mind, heart, and conscience. Courtesy demands that the letter be answered. The answer will necessitate the probing of the soul. Through the moral thoughtfulness thus engendered God may lead many hearts to himself. When have you written a letter for Jesus? Will you not write one to-day? The young man or woman who is your companion in office or shop, or your mate in school, might be won to Christ if you should write a loving letter in the Master's name. Kindle thus the flame of zeal on behalf of Christ by writing a tender, earnest letter to win some soul to his service.

All forms of business ability and experience should be stirred up in Christ's service. God should be the head partner in every business firm. God should preside over all the Boards of Trade and all other great business enterprises. All business should be begun, continued, and ended with his approval. Then business enterprises become sacred. We may serve God as truly in the marts of trade as in the courts of the temple. It is as much the duty of some men to acquire wealth for God as it is the duty

of other men to preach the gospel of Christ. The kingdom of God needs vast sums of consecrated money. Missions at home and abroad are languishing because God's children restrain their gifts for his cause. Oh, for men and women who will consecrate their millions on God's altar!

The gift of beauty and all forms of personal attractiveness may be used for God. Beauty of face, and especially of character, is a gift that may become wonderfully potent for good. Skill in music is God's gift, and it is a gift which may be developed to unlimited proportions and fully consecrated to the cause of Christ. There is magical power in music. When it fills the soul it gives kinship to angels and to God. All the marvels attributed to music, trembling in resistless charm from the lyre of Apollo, are far surpassed by the anthems of redemption, bursting forth from hearts aglow with the matchless love of Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. O men and women, children of God and heirs of glory, have you not a song to sing for your King? Can you not sing of the Name that is above every name? Shall not angels hear to-day your song as you attempt to chant the unspeakable love of your divine Lord and Master? We need men and women who will show holy ingenuity and consecrated initiative in the service of God. We need men who will use all their business skill in planning for the kingdom of Christ. We need the masterful talent which organizes great corporations, which builds continental

railways, and which subdues material kingdoms, to be laid on God's altar for the salvation of the world and for the glory of the Christ. O divine Christ, lay thy consecrating hand on the mighty brains and hearts of the kingly men who dominate the enterprises of the world, and use these men as thy glad and grateful servants to advance the kingdom of God on earth!

We need to stir up the gift of prayer in the hearts and on the lips of all God's people. Incredible as it may seem it is still true that thousands in all our churches are both prayerless and workless. They have a name to live, but are practically dead. Dead men fill pulpits and pews alike. Not to advance in the Christian life is to retrograde. Not to grow in grace is to lose the grace once possessed. Decay in grace ends in the death of gifts and graces. Thousands in the churches are cheerless and powerless in their Christian lives because their gifts lie dormant. Faculties that are not improved are inevitably impaired. All our active faculties are multiplied and strengthened by use, and hopelessly weakened by disuse. Animals living in caves differ from their epigeous, or above-ground, allies in being blind; indeed, they become partially or totally eyeless. Thus fish in caves lose their eyes. God will not waste a pair of eyes on fish living in darkness. The arm that hangs long at our side unused will wither; rightly used it will increase in strength. A flame never roused becomes dimmed and dies. The

text alludes to the fire of the temple, which was always to be kept burning, and it was necessary that it be frequently renewed that the flame might glow with fervid heat.

All these principles have direct application to the duty of prayer. Men who will not pray partly lose the power to pray. They forget that God gives the sweetest flowers of paradise in answer to prayer. Prayer crowns God with honor, and his people with benediction. Prayerful pews make powerful pulpits. Prayer is the spiritual pulse of the redeemed heart. A prayerless life is a joyless life. Families who sit at their tables and eat their food without a word of gratitude to God are forming kinship with animals when they might have friendship with angels. Food without grace vulgarizes parents and degrades children. Can you not at least bow your heads in a silent grace before partaking of the food on your tables and thus assert your kinship with the noblest souls now on earth, as well as with those who have passed from earth to become exalted saints in heaven? O men and women, bow the knee before God and lift the heart to him in confession, in adoration, and in supplication. By so doing you will experimentally understand these words of Tennyson:

More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of. Wherefore let thy voice
Rise like a fountain for me night and day.
For what are men better than sheep or goats
That nourish a blind life within the brain,

If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
Both for themselves and those who call them friend?
For so the whole round world is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.

WAYS OF STIRRING UP OUR GIFTS.

We do much toward enlivening our gifts when we cherish a strong desire for their increase. The man who is satisfied with his attainments in the Christian life is not likely to make further progress. The Apostle Paul showed the true nobility of his nature when he declared that he had not already attained, nor was already perfect, but that forgetting the things which were behind he pressed toward the perfect ideal as given in the life of Jesus Christ. The man who believes that he has reached the perfect standard, reaches his conclusion, not by exalting his life to the ideal standard, but by lowering the standard to his actual attainments. The ideal is the combination of the beauties and perfections of different individuals so as to form a perfect type or model. The Apollo Belvedere is the ideal of the beauty and proportion of the masculine human frame. But Jesus Christ is the ideal of the divine human life. So long as we keep that ideal before us and strive toward its attainment we are making progress in the Christian life; the moment we think we have reached that ideal progress ceases. The statue of the Christ by Thorwaldsen, in the Metropolitan Church at Copenhagen, the capital of the

artist's native land, is the grandest and most august representation of Him who bore our griefs and carried our sorrows ever fashioned in material form. No hands but the artist's ever touched that statue. At times he despaired of ever actualizing his ideal. But when this glorious statue was completed, deep melancholy settled on the soul of Thorwaldsen. When asked the reason he touchingly replied, "My genius is decaying; till now my ideal has always been far beyond my execution; but now I have attained my ideal. I shall never have a great idea again." The disciple will never fully attain the lofty ideal Christ has given the world. An ideal is better than a thousand ideas. Men of vision rule the world. The days of a church or a nation are numbered when men of exalted ideals and glorious visions are no longer found. Let us ever keep the perfect ideal before us that it may rightly enliven our gifts.

We must also use all the opportunities presented to us for the exercise of our gifts in order that they may be greatly multiplied. Suggestive is the word opportunity. What is its heart meaning? It means literally at or before the port or harbor; it comes from the prefix *ob*, and the word *portus*, the port or harbor. We ought to be prepared to enter the open door when summoned by the call of duty. We often miss important occasions by waiting for what we deem greater opportunities. By faithfully performing the duties of the hour we shall transform

apparently insignificant occasions into sublime opportunities. We ought not, therefore, to wait for what some call great occasions, but rather to make ordinary occasions extraordinary by the faithful performance of their obligations. We see Disraeli attempting to make his maiden speech in the House of Commons with so many extravagant gestures and in so grandiloquent a style that he became the subject of great ridicule. Stopping abruptly he made the prophetic remark, "I shall sit down now, but the time is coming when you will hear me." Then he began carefully to study the style of the most successful parliamentary orators. He propagated his political tenets in his novels, and he rose step by step until in 1868 he became premier. The Jewish novelist thus became the champion of the British aristocracy and the most spectacular statesman of the century. Though Tory in theory he was a Liberal in fact. His success was largely due to his skill as debater and orator. He developed his talents by making ordinary occasions extraordinary. So may we increase all our powers for Christ and the church. Give your testimony for Christ in the smaller circles of our young people's meeting. Embrace every opportunity for stirring up your gifts, and greater opportunities will come. And you will thus grow in the grace of Christ as Lord and Master. It would be easy to illustrate this principle by reference to Demosthenes, to Webster, to Spurgeon, and to other great thinkers and eloquent

speakers who by faithfulness to that which was least became mighty in the eyes of nations and in the service of humanity.

Most of all can we best stir up our gifts by bringing them to Christ in faithful service and in earnest prayer that he may fully consecrate them to his service. There was the lad who had five barley loaves and two small fishes—but what were they as a supply for the hunger of thousands? But in obedience to the command of Christ about five thousand sat down that their hunger might be satisfied. Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks, and the distribution to the disciples began. On went the disciples giving to the hungry multitudes, and still the supply continued, and still the distribution proceeded. The thousands were satisfied, and twelve baskets were filled with the fragments that remained. When the consecrating touch of Christ comes on our gifts and services, however few and feeble they may be in themselves, they are made many and mighty for blessing men and for honoring God.

REASONS FOR STIRRING UP OUR GIFTS.

We ought to stir up our gifts because of the solemn obligations under which we are placed. We should be duteous disciples. A noble watchword is duty. What is duty? It is simply that which is due, that which is due to ourselves, to our fellow-men, and to God. Once the word was spelled "duety." We are under the most solemn obligations to make

the most of ourselves both for the time that now is and for that which is to come. No man has a right to be physically, intellectually, or morally a dwarf, when he might be in all three respects somewhat of a giant. We ought to enter the kingdom of heaven above full-grown men and women; we ought not to be barely saved, but to enter through the gates with an abundant salvation. We are under solemn obligations also to our fellow-men. We are, in a very real sense, our brother's keeper. Often we can best show our love to God, whom we have not seen, by doing service to our brother whom we do see.

We ought also to stir up our gifts because of the wonderful opportunities of the hour. We are living in the most glorious age in the history of the race. Opportunities for service abound as never before. The discoveries of modern science enable us to multiply ourselves in the service of men as was impossible even a generation ago. Steamships and railways, telegraphs, telephones, and especially wireless telegraphy are transforming the world. They make it a whispering gallery which we may make vocal with God's love and resplendent with God's glory. A grander day is speedily coming, a day of millennial blessing to all classes and conditions of men. We may hopefully sing with Burns:

For a' that, and a' that,
It's comin' yet, for a' that,
That man to man, the warld o'er,
Shall brithers be, for a' that.

Especially ought we to enkindle the flame of our zeal into a fervid glow under the inspiration of gratitude to our divine Lord and Master. Christ has loved us with an everlasting love and redeemed us with an eternal salvation. We must have stones, and not hearts, in our bosoms if we do not love him for his unspeakable love in his life and death on our behalf. In loving God and in serving men we best show our gratitude to our divine Lord. Ingratitude toward Jesus Christ is one of the most hateful of sins. Well might Shakespeare in *King Lear* speak of ingratitude as the marble-hearted fiend, more hideous than the sea-monster; and further say:

Sharper than a serpent's tooth it is
To have a thankless child.

O come this morning to Calvary! Gaze upon Him who was "nailed for our advantage on the bitter cross." Behold his regal brow crowned with thorns. Hear his dying words. Then let love, glowing, consuming heavenly love, fill your souls. Under the inspiration of this love, go out to win men to God. Thus will the flame be enkindled, the life ennobled, and the whole being be so filled with Christ and his love that earth will be a foretaste of heaven. Thus heaven will be vastly sublimer and diviner when, with our increased, ennobled, and divinized gifts and graces we cast our crowns at the Master's feet and fill heaven's lofty dome with our songs of praise to Christ as our Prophet, Priest, and King.

XVI

EXCUSES FOR PROCRASTINATION

Text: Suffer me first.—Luke 9 : 59.

CHRIST was the absolutely accurate analyst of the character of all whom he met. He needed not that any one should tell him anything about those with whom he came in contact, for he knew what was in man. In this respect he is the unique Personality in the human race. Three men, two of them on their own motion, and one of them by Christ's invitation, were seekers after him. The first was enthusiastic, impulsive, and somewhat unreflecting. In this spirit he declared his willingness to follow the Master ; but Jesus would have him count the cost, affirming that, unlike the foxes which have holes, and the birds that have nests, the Son of man had not where to lay his head. The second candidate was called by the Master to be a disciple. He excused himself, saying, "Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father." If his father were still living this request meant that he desired to remain with and care for his father until he should die. If his father were actually dead, the request meant that following Jesus would be postponed until the expiration of the seven days of lamentation before burial, or to the end of the year

of mourning after burial. Our Lord did not make light of the solemn duty of honoring parents. But he saw that this man put a condition on obeying the divine command; he saw that the excuse was indicative of a divided heart instead of one wholly given to the service of the Master. Duty to a father must not be put before duty to God. Nothing must be permitted, however sacred in itself, to come between us and our duty to God. This second candidate for discipleship needed this rebuke which our Lord so faithfully administered. The third candidate for discipleship was also a volunteer, but he wished first to bid farewell to those in his home. Elisha, when called by Elijah from the plow, preferred a similar request. But Elisha was firm and determined in his purpose; his request was therefore granted. This candidate was fickle and wavering in his resolution; his request was therefore denied. No man, putting his hand to the plow, must look back; even looking back shows unfitness for the kingdom of God. Many persons are apparently well disposed toward Christ, but they do not recognize the supreme importance of his claims.

THE CLAIMS OF BUSINESS AND PLEASURE.

There are those who say: "Suffer us first to attend to some pressing matter of business." No word of mine will be spoken to depreciate the importance, in their rightful place, of the claims of business or other earthly engagements. We are ex-

known in his service of God perils by land and by sea, and persecutions bitter and prolonged, exhorts us to "Rejoice evermore." Religion is sunshine, hope, peace, love, and joy. It is a well of water within us, springing up into everlasting life. It gives a silver lining to every cloud. It gives ability in business, a charm in social life, fitness for artistic culture, and a unique glory to all earthly experiences. It alone makes life worth living. If you would know the highest pleasure possible this side of heaven, give your heart unreservedly to God and repose trustingly on his precious promises.

MORE FEELING.

Again, there are those who say, "Suffer us first to have more and better feeling and then we will follow Christ." Language of this character Christian workers constantly hear. Such language greatly tries their patience. Waiting for more and better feeling before beginning the service of Christ is one of the deadliest delusions of Satan. Our union with Christ is not dependent upon frames and feelings. The man who trusts in his feelings and not in Christ dishonors religion and deprives himself of its richest blessings. Such a man is exalted to heaven to-day and depressed to hades to-morrow; such a man's religion is dependent upon his dinner and his digestion rather than on his faith and his Lord; such a man is building upon the shifting sand. We never read in Scripture, "therefore, being justi-

ture. The man who makes his business his God is an abominable idolater. Such a man will fare worse standing before Christ's judgment-seat than the heathen who never heard of Christ and his love.

Again, there are those who say, "Suffer us first to have more of this world's pleasure and then we will seek God." The men and women who so say are the devil's dupes. They assume that religion is synonymous with gloom. No assumption could possibly be farther from the truth. There may be gloomy, melancholy, dismal, and morose Christians. Their long faces, sullen looks, and gloomy words are not because of but in spite of such true religion as they possess. What is there in true religion to make a man gloomy? Does the knowledge that a man's sins are forgiven, that he is at peace with God, with himself, and with his fellow-men, that all things will work together for good to him on earth, and that he will enjoy eternal felicity in heaven, tend to make life here and now an experience of sadness and gloom? I have known the presence of true religion to give sadness, but I have known its absence to make life a foretaste of perdition. I have heard men on beds of sickness, when death stared them in the face, calling in fearful agony upon God for mercy.

Religion is the synonym of joy. The psalmist, who had wandered from God and was now seeking his face, earnestly prayed, "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation." The Apostle Paul, who had

horted to be diligent in business, while we are fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. Rightly understood, there is no conflict between the claims of legitimate business and the duties of following Christ. Both are important and solemn obligations. They ought, however, to be considered and performed in their true order. In his great Sermon on the Mount our Lord distinctly commanded us to "Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness." All other things should be subordinate to this aim. No man has a right to put the claims even of the noblest business between him and his duty to his God. When he so does he degrades his business, dishonors himself, and disobeys his Lord. No legitimate business is injured by our service of God. If a man cannot take his religion into his business he must have a very poor religion or a very bad business—probably he has both.

Many of the merchant princes in the great commercial world to-day, as well as the foremost lawyers, physicians, artists, and scholars of the world, are as distinguished for the lowliness and sincerity of their religion as they are for the loftiness of their attainments and the nobility of their character. No man familiar with the facts will deny that the foremost thinkers of to-day in almost all departments of thought and activity are on the side of Jesus Christ. Indeed, it is not too much to say that except a man be religious he cannot have true nobility and complete symmetry of character and cul-

fied by feeling we have peace with God," but we do read, "being therefore justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." We should stand by faith, not by feeling; live by faith, not by feeling, and hold fast the profession of our faith, not the selfish and often nauseous confession of our feeling. One often wishes when he sees its hindrance that the word feeling were stricken out of our religious vocabulary.

What is it to be a Christian? A Christian is one who believes in Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Saviour. He is a man who studies to follow the example and obey the precepts of Jesus Christ. He is one who follows Christ no matter how he feels. He obeys Christ whether he feels like it or not. What has feeling to do with his faith? He is anchored to the Eternal Rock, Christ Jesus, and not to the shifting sands of personal feeling. I came the other day from Washington to New York on the Pennsylvania Railway. At the Broad Street Station, Philadelphia, all the seats were turned over before the train resumed its journey. Until I neared Jersey City my "feeling" was that I was going toward Washington and not toward New York. But what had my feeling to do with the running of the engine? It sped grandly on, and soon it rolled into the station at Jersey City. Had I been as foolish in travel as many men are in religion, I would have gotten off that train and waited until my feeling indicated that I was going toward New York. Had I done so I

probably would be waiting still at some station for this "feeling."

Obey Christ no matter how you feel. If right feeling comes from obedience, accept it and rejoice in it; but do not wait for it. Move right on in the line of obedience with or without feeling. Do not wait for deeper convictions of sin. It is Christ who saves and not the sense of sin. If there is conviction of sin enough to drive you to Christ as your Saviour, you will assuredly be saved. Wait neither for the agonizing convictions of sin, nor for the ecstatic joys of faith of which you have heard some persons speak. Act on your judgment like calm, sensible, intelligent men and women. Obey Christ first, last, and always, and rest assured that right feeling will come.

WAITING FOR KNOWLEDGE.

There are those who refuse to follow Christ, saying: "Suffer us first to know more of Christ's doctrine." It certainly is commendable to desire to know more of the teaching or doctrine of our divine Lord. But how shall we know more of that doctrine? Is that doctrine likely to be learned by us while we are living in disobedience and even in open rebellion to Jesus Christ? He himself said with marked profundity of wisdom, "If any man will do his will he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from myself." We have in this passage the formulation of

a universal law. In no other way is it possible to get an experimental knowledge of Christ's doctrine. Obedience to the Divine Will is necessary to knowledge of divine truth. This law applies equally to the acquisition of all kinds of knowledge. The student of science must possess the scientific spirit; he must submit to the laws by which scientific knowledge is acquired. If he will not so submit he may become a sciolist, but never a scientist. The same law applies to the study of music, of art, of literature, and of knowledge of every kind. If you would learn Christ's doctrine you must go to Christ's school. He who would walk the lofty heights of true knowledge must sit long in lowly obedience at the feet of Jesus Christ, the world's great Teacher.

There are profound mysteries and difficult problems at present unsolved and unsolvable in the Bible. If the Bible is a revelation from God, we must expect it to contain truths above our present apprehension. A Bible which all could fully understand in all its parts we could not receive as God's final revelation. Wherever the finite and the infinite come into contact, insoluble problems arise. The difficulty is not so much in the divine revelation as it is in our imperfect human apprehension. We admit that many things in the Bible are above our reason in its present stage of development. But our reason is not the measure of the highest reason. There are probably intelligences so far above us that what is inscrutable to us may be to them thor-

oughly understandable. The book of nature, as well as the volume of revelation, is mysterious. No one can really explain the essence of matter. We can divide matter into three kinds or classes, but when asked to define matter the wise man will remain silent, or speak with great caution. Many things in the Bible which were once inexplicable are now thoroughly understood. Many things which are inexplicable to-day will be explicable to-morrow. It is evermore true that additional light is to break forth from God's word.

But is it fair to speak as if the Bible consisted for the most part of contradictions, conundrums, and difficulties? Is it quite honest even to imply that the Bible is chiefly of this character? Are there not in it great and blessed truths which are as simple as they are sublime? Augustine long ago affirmed that if the Bible has depths in which an elephant can swim, it also has shallows in which a lamb can wade. It is a lamp for simple men, rather than a puzzle for learned students. Could anything be simpler than such words as these, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"; "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life"; "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Could any man ask for plainer truths than these? When a man comes to me affirming that he refuses to accept Christ because there are things in the

Bible which he cannot understand, I have a right to ask him, "Have you obeyed all the commands in the Bible which you do understand?" Why should a man trouble himself about the meaning of additional commands when he refuses to obey those whose meaning is thoroughly clear? Why can we not have common sense in religion as we do in matters of daily business? A man does not refuse to ride on trolley cars because he does not understand electricity. He does not refuse to cross the ocean because there are a thousand things in navigation of which he is ignorant. Why should a man choke himself with bones when there is more good and boneless meat than he can possibly eat? Come just now and just as you are into Christ's school. Begin at once the Christian life. Do not wait with the fear that you may not hold out. Trust yourself fully to Christ and he will keep you by his divine grace and by his almighty power, and will give you at last the crown of victory.

HYPOCRITES IN THE CHURCH.

There are also those who say, "Suffer us first to be sure that all professing Christians are not hypocrites." There are men and women who are ready to affirm that all professing Christians are hypocrites. Is this affirmation true? This is a question of fact; it ought to be decided as other questions of fact are decided. It is interesting to know what was Christ's opinion of his immediate disciples, and it is

quite safe to affirm that his opinion of Christians to-day does not differ widely from his opinion of the disciples in that early day. Of the disciples who gathered about him, Christ said, "Ye are the salt of the earth." Nothing is more certain than that this divine salt has not lost its savor; nothing is more certain than that this heavenly preservative will never lose its savor. It may be that the world has owed its preservation many times and in many places to the presence of God's people. He who knew the hearts of all men said with marked emphasis, as the original shows, "Ye are the light of the world." Elsewhere Jesus declares that he himself is the light of the world; here he gives that honor in part to his disciples. We are, of course, to understand that the light which Christians emit is really derived from Christ himself, who is *the* light. They are thus as a city set on a hill, which cannot be hid from the eyes of the world.

The church is a school for imperfect men and women who are striving to overcome their imperfections. It is not, when rightly viewed, the home of self-complacent souls who believe that they have already attained, and are already perfect. The true idea of sainthood is a struggle toward loftier attainment. Thus the Apostle Paul affirmed that he forgot the things that were behind and pressed toward the mark of the heavenly calling. I affirm, without fear of successful contradiction, that the noblest men and the truest women beneath the stars are found in the

Church of Jesus Christ; but, noble as they are, they will be vastly nobler when their Christian character has attained its complete symmetry. They are progressing toward perfection as a portrait progresses toward completion in the hands of an artist. Like such a portrait when the artist begins his work, Christians at the beginning of their Christian lives are simply outline sketches. The Divine Artist will fill up this sketch with the lines and colors of a complete character. Joys and sorrows, disappointments and achievements will soften or deepen the lines, and will heighten or subdue the colors. The light of eternity will one day fall upon the work. The Christian will see his Lord face to face, and the glorious vision will completely change the human form into the divine image.

All sensible men know that we are not saved by the goodness of other men. How, then, can any man expect to be saved by the badness of other people? In answer to all men's criticisms of Christians, as if the faults of the one were exculpatory for the abominable and inexcusable sin of rejecting Christ on the part of the other, he says to each one, "What is that to thee? Follow thou me." Why do you not follow him? This is your personal and eternal duty. You stand alone in his sight. Alone you must die; alone you must stand at the judgment-seat of Christ. I beseech you now by all that is noble in manhood, sacred in womanhood, and solemn in duty to serve God. If the church

were perfect you may rest assured that you would not be received into its membership, for you are far from perfection. But you may begin now to be an imperfect Christian, and thus following Christ through evil and good report, one day the crown of glory shall be placed upon your brow.

WAITING GOD'S TIME.

Here is a man who says, "I will follow Christ, but suffer me first to bide God's time before beginning the service." It is well always and in all things to await God's time, but we must wait God's time in God's way. Lurking under the general idea of biding God's time is the objection to the doctrine of election. Little is heard of this doctrine in our day compared with the numerous sermons once preached on various phases of this subject. The doctrine of predestination is immeasurable in compass and infinite in depth. But a soul seeking Christ has nothing whatever to do with the profound depths and lofty heights of this great doctrine. When a man says, "I would follow Christ if I knew I was one of the elect," he is taking a position in religion which he utterly repudiates in temporal affairs. And yet men talk in this way regarding the acceptance of the salvation of Jesus Christ. A man has fallen overboard; a rope is thrown him, but he refuses to grasp the rope, saying "I do not know whether I am predestined to be saved." We can certainly say to such a man, "If you do not grasp this rope you are cer-

tainly predestined to be drowned because of your unspeakable foolishness." The word of God says: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."

Why can we not have common sense in religion? It is a thousand pities that we have used the word "rationalism" to describe a system of thought which teaches that religion is, in some sense, divorced from reason. Doubtless, historically the word "rationalism" has been employed by men who are opposed to the supernatural in revelation and religion; but the word ought to be rescued from this abuse. Rightly understood, reason is the handmaid of religion. The Bible distinctly appeals to our reason, God saying, "Come now, let us reason together." It is irreligion that is irrational. It is true that with our present development of reason we cannot reconcile human freedom and divine sovereignty. I am free and consciousness so affirms. God is a sovereign, and revelation and history so affirm. Reconcile these two truths I cannot; believe them I must. Human freedom is a column rising into the clouds, and divine sovereignty is another such column; but beyond the clouds these columns curve toward each other until they meet in a perfect arch.

By all means let us bide God's time. But what is God's time? We are not left in doubt at this point, for the word of God has spoken: "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." To-day alone is ours; strictly speaking, there

is no to-morrow. The Spanish proverb says: "The road 'To-morrow' leads to the town 'Never.'" Young has well said that "procrastination is the thief of time," but it is vastly more and worse than that; it is the destroyer of immortal souls. The day will come when the Master of the house shall have risen and closed the door. But it is still the day of grace, the hour of mercy, and the accepted time. Seek the Lord now while he may be found, call upon him while he is near, and you shall be saved with an everlasting salvation, beginning on earth and reaching its ineffable glory in Christ's immediate presence in heaven.

XVII

NAMES IN THE BOOK OF LIFE

Text: But they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.—Rev. 21 : 27.

WE have in this text and context some exquisite touches in the picture of heaven, painted by the Apostle John during the ecstatic exaltation experienced by him while on Patmos, a bare and rocky island of the Ægean Sea. Our attention is directed to the twelve gates of pearl, to the streets of gold, and especially to the fact that in that celestial and holy city was no building set apart as a temple. That fact is worthy of particular notice, and of special emphasis. It is most suggestive that there was no separate place where God was adored. The heavenly Jerusalem was not like the earthly Jerusalem; in the latter there was one building peculiarly consecrated to the worship of the Almighty. In this heavenly city, the entire place was one great temple. Worship, praise, and adoration ascended to God from all parts of that city; there God and the Lamb, in their celestial glory and splendor were the light. There was thus no need of the sun, nor of the moon, for the glory of the Lord, in its sublime effulgence, filled with light this heavenly temple. It is interest-

ing also that, unlike earthly cities, its gates were open both day and night. Indeed, there was no night there. There is nothing there which might represent darkness, nothing which would be an emblem of darkness. There was no sorrow, no bereavement, there were no tears, no graves.

From this blissful abode, certain classes are excluded; these are named, and their destiny is described. The list is long; it is also a sinful and sorrowful list. We are also definitely informed as to who shall be admitted. No one will be there whose name is not written in the Lamb's book of life. No question, therefore, can be more personal and more important than this one, "Is my name recorded there?"

A GREAT HONOR.

Let me approach the discussion of the book of life by several stages. Notice, in the first place, that it is a great honor to have one's name recorded with commendation in any good book. Such a record suggests our desire to be associated with men and women whose names are to live in history. It is a valuable asset in any man's life to have his name recorded in a famous book. A distinguished Frenchman lectured in one of the churches of this city. The pastor of the church introduced him to the audience. On his return to France he wrote a book on America, and in that book he devotes a section to the delivery of his lecture in the church which he

names. He also mentions eulogistically the name of the pastor of that church, and the introduction which that pastor gave to the lecturer. Dean Stanley, when in this country, visited Ticonderoga, and the historic places in its vicinity; the entire neighborhood is rich in reminiscences of the Colonial and Revolutionary periods. The pastor of one of the churches of the village was a member of the party on that occasion. The dean devoted a glowing chapter to that visit, and in that chapter he has placed on the pages of enduring history the name of that pastor. It is easy to believe that no part of the volume was so interesting to that pastor as that chapter.

Many men and women have become known to future generations because their names are recorded in Boswell's "Life of Johnson." Indeed, it is scarcely too much to say that we should never have heard of James Boswell had he not been the author of two volumes on the life of Dr. Samuel Johnson, volumes which appeared in 1791. Lord Macaulay, in his imperial and majestic manner, speaks of Boswell as one of the smallest of men; he tells us that Johnson himself said that Boswell lost his opportunity for immortality by not having been alive when Pope wrote his "Dunciad," for Boswell might have been made king of the dunces. Lord Macaulay also says that Homer is not more distinctively the first of heroic poets, Shakespeare the first of dramatists, Demosthenes the first of orators, than Bos-

well is the first of biographers. He further tells us that he is so far in advance of all other biographers that the others have really no place in the list. Think of the men and women who are introduced to us by Boswell, of whom perhaps we should never have known! Who in this audience would have known of Mrs. Thrale, who afterward became Mrs. Piozzi, at Streatham, near Croydon, but that her house for sixteen years was Johnson's home frequently for several days each week; and that her gracious influence toned down his eccentricities in dress and manner, and that his tendency to gloom was greatly neutralized by this vivacious and charming woman.

I venture to say that few in this audience, or in any audience, would ever have heard of Colley Cibber, were it not that Pope has pilloried and immortalized him in his "Dunciad," which appeared in three books, in 1728; and yet Colley Cibber was an actor, a dramatist, a volunteer in the forces which supported the Prince of Orange, and in 1730 he was appointed poet laureate. His poems were so worthless that Pope subjected him to scathing ridicule and made him the hero of the new "Dunciad," which appeared in four books in 1742. Probably few of us would have ever heard of noble Arthur Henry Hallam, although he was a young man of great promise, educated at Eton, and Trinity College, Cambridge, and who died so suddenly at Vienna, were it not that Alfred Tennyson, to whose sister Hallam was engaged to be married, and whose friendship Tenny-

son made in the university, has made him immortal in his "In Memoriam." That is a marvelous poem. Tennyson touches the deepest questions of life and of death in that poem. He made the premature death of Hallam his text in that poem, and so the name of Hallam is inseparably associated with the name of Tennyson. Robert Young Hayne was a man of marked ability in debate in the South Carolina State Legislature, and later in the Senate of the United States. He opposed with great vigor and vociferous eloquence anti-slavery measures. But he would not have had enduring historic mention were it not that Daniel Webster, in January, 1830, in the United States Senate, with unanswerable logic and unrivaled eloquence, replied to him. Webster in that answer delivered the most wonderful forensic oration heard since the days of Demosthenes. Great was the speech of Hayne; but vastly greater was the speech of Webster. Webster really gave Hayne his enduring place in the history of those heroic days.

Scott, Dickens, and George Eliot have created enduring characters. No writer except Shakespeare has created so many characters as has Dickens. He has given us the names of certain types in daily life; and they will abide on the page of literature almost as really as if they were genuine characters of history. Micawber will live. In him Dickens created an accomplished Epicurean, the condemnable and yet delightful Micawber. George Eliot has given enduring life to Mrs. Poyser. Travelers in certain

parts of England and Scotland almost expect to find the characters created and immortalized by Sir Walter Scott, Robert Burns, and other great writers. The fame they have given to certain characters and neighborhoods causes tens of thousands of tourists to visit Scotland and other lands every year.

The desire to have our name written in a book of even human production illustrates our sense of inherent immortality. The illustration is still stronger when we think of the Lamb's book of life. The sense of immortality is a universal conviction. It is part of the original constitution of every rational man. It is found in all countries and in all centuries. It is impossible to explain its universality, except on the hypothesis of the reality of immortality itself. I rejoice in that sense of inherent immortality; it is suggestive of man's glory as made in the image of the eternal God. In death the organic element of the man's real being will take to itself another form and will live on in the years to come. I like these words from George Macdonald, "I came from God, and I am going back to God, and I won't have any gaps of death in the middle of my life." From God we came; to God we go; and there will be no gap in the middle of our life.

A GREATER HONOR.

Will you let me advance a step? It is a *greater honor* to have one's name written with commendation in *The Book*, the Bible. It is something to have

one's name down in the Bible, even when that name is written by an uninspired hand. It means something in a man's life that his name is in the family register in the family Bible; this is distinctly a valuable asset. When a man's name is not in the family Bible, an element of power has gone out of his life. It means much in any life to have a father and mother who so love the Bible that they want to have the names of their children written in the family register in the family Bible. I venture to say that all men and women in this audience who know that their names are written in that register will be conscious that that fact in itself is an element of inspiration to nobler endeavors and to loftier achievements along the whole line of life.

But it is still more significant, along the line of historic perpetuity, to have one's name written in the Bible in an inspired hand. Sometimes, indeed, such an inscription means an immortality of infamy. Think how Ahab has come through the ages, because his name is in the Bible, branded with weakness and wickedness! Think how the name of Jezebel has been perpetuated as the synonym of gross idolatry, of vulgar sin, and of subtle power as a temptress because her name is written in the Bible! In her case, for the first time, the chief wife of a king of Israel was of the accursed Canaanite race. The name of Jezebel was long of dreadful import in Israelitish ears, though in later ages it appeared in the innocent form of Isabella. Her name

is found in the book of Revelation as the synonym of gross evil! It is an awful thing to be pilloried forever in the Bible! A million years from to-day, in all probability, Ahab and Jezebel will still be in the pillory. Think how the name of Pilate is the synonym of immortal infamy, because of the connection in which it is found in the Bible! Think how it has come down through some of the creeds of the church in a phrase which gives it an immortality of shame, "Suffered under Pontius Pilate." How terrible to be associated with Jesus Christ as the man who crucified him! In unnumbered years the name of Pilate will still be branded with infamy. Think of the name of Judas! You would not give your boy the name Judas. But once that was a beautiful name. It is simply the Greek form of the Hebrew name Judah, meaning praise or honor. But now it is synonymous with the vilest treachery, with the foulest ingratitude, and with the most satanic infamy! There is no mother who would call her boy Judas. It is a terrible thing to associate your name with the Name that is above every name as a traitor to that name. Perhaps, in God's records, your name is associated with the name of Christ, as one who once confessed him and who has now denied him; as one who bears the name, and yet is disloyal to the character of Jesus Christ. What a painful thought that in God's records to-day your name may be associated with the name of Jesus as a denier, as a traitor! God forbid!

I turn to the other side of this sad picture, and I see how glorious it is to have one's name divinely and approvingly written in the Bible. There stands the name of Abraham, who was called "the friend of God." What a superb eulogy! What immortal glory, as a nimbus, surrounds the name of Abraham! Read the brief biography of Enoch: "Enoch walked with God." Some had forsaken the true God; they walked without God. Not so did Enoch. Between him and God there was community in deed, word, and thought. In the days of his ancestor Seth some men called on the name of the Lord; but Enoch went further. He walked with God, thus enjoying God's presence in all the relations of life. Enoch thus loved good companionship. He did not simply step out now and then along the path with God, but he walked with God. Thus walking he reached the confines of life; and he then kept on walking with God. He is walking with God to-day in eternal fellowship. With what honor is the name of Joshua, the devout warrior, the chivalrous knight of truth and God, written in the Bible! David—with his occasional faults and follies—is still mentioned as the man after God's own heart! Think of Mary with her broken alabaster box! Jesus was a true prophet when he said: "Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done, shall be spoken of for a memorial of her." This prophecy has been literally fulfilled. The fragrance of that

alabaster box has filled the world. We inhale it to-day. O Mary, glorious and immortal was thine act of love when that ointment thou didst pour on the head of Jesus. That act shall be held in everlasting remembrance. I would rather perform some noble and loving act for Jesus than wear the proudest crown of the greatest kingdom on earth to-day. I would rather wash and kiss his feet than sit on the loftiest throne of any kingdom on earth. Look at Dorcas; behold her with her needle, making garments for the poor, and making at the same time for herself a name more enduring than the names of Roman generals and emperors, and of Greek philosophers and poets. Her fame is more lasting than the monuments of bronze or marble. Think of the immortal honor that comes to Paul and to John, because of their places on the page of inspired literature! Turn to the inscriptions and to the salutations in some of the Epistles of Paul and observe how he has immortalized men and women. Examine the last chapter of the Epistle to the Romans and call the roll of the men and women whose names Paul has there written and thus made glorious and immortal! There is Phebe, "servant of the church which is at Cenchrea," Priscilla and Aquila, "my helpers in Christ Jesus." Paul says of them, "Who have for my life laid down their own necks." What a commendation! You go on—read the honored list. Time will not permit me to recite all their names. The Apostle Paul was a courteous gentle-

man. When he received hospitality or any other kindness he appreciatively recognized the fact. We have in modern times a kind of epistolary correspondence called bread-and-butter letters; in England these letters are called "roofers." They are recognitions of the hospitality enjoyed in the homes, under the roofs of our friends. Paul writes letters expressive of his appreciation of all the courtesies extended to him. What a great thing it was to be the host and hostess of the Apostle Paul! What a greater thing to be the host and hostess of Jesus Christ and have him become our host, and we become his guests!

THE GREATEST HONOR.

And now we reach the last stage in our approach to the immortal roll of honor. It is the *greatest* thing to have one's name written in the "Lamb's book of life." This is the highest honor known among men or angels. When a student in college I committed to memory passages from the Odes of Horace, as well as some of the most striking passages in Homer. I remember that Horace says in his "Carmina," according to the English translation: "If you rank me with the lyric poets, my exalted head shall strike the stars." But what are the lyric poets compared with the saints whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life? It is a great honor to have high rank among the students of astronomy; the science of mighty orbs, stupendous

distances, and majestic adjustments in time and space. How I would rejoice to be a great astronomer! How I could sit at night and study the stars and still more fully appreciate the psalmist's words in the Nineteenth psalm: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handy-work." It is an enviable ambition to know biology, the science of living organisms, science of growth, of health, and of life itself. It is highly commendable to be a masterful student of law. If I had my life to live over again I would take a course in law before entering the ministry. Law is the science of legislation, of government, of civilization. It is simply sublime to be deeply learned in philosophy, the science including the profound things of men and of creation. It is grander still to know theology; for theology is the queen of all the sciences. Theology is the science of God. Theology is the science of man in his relations to God. But what avails it to know all things from protoplasm to God, and not know God as Creator and as Redeemer? What shall it profit a man for his name to be written on the honor roll of the academies of science in London, Vienna, Paris, St. Petersburg, and New York, and he be without God and without hope? Oh! What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world of science and art and lose his own soul in all its highest possibilities of life and love?

To have one's name written in the Lamb's book

of life implies that one has lived a Christly life. We shall never have our names written in the book of life except the name of the Lamb is written on our hearts and lives. "Cut deeper," said the French soldier to the surgeon when he was probing for the bullet, "and you will find the name of the emperor." I want to have the name that is above every name written on my heart. We shall never, never, enter heaven then and there, except heaven enter us here and now. We must have heaven here before heaven can have us hereafter. Only they who know Christ now and confess Christ now shall be known and confessed by Christ hereafter. I put it to you, women and men. We are sitting quietly in God's house amid the solemnities of this sacred place on this stormy day. I put to you now this question: Is your name written in the Lamb's book of life? Have you ever asked Jesus Christ to write your name there? Is your wife's name written there? And does your wife's name stand there alone? O man, are you to be separated from your wife forever? Are you to be divorced at the judgment-seat of God and never be united in eternity? Are your children's names in the Lamb's book of life? Will you not just now lift up the prayer to God from your deepest soul, "O Lamb of God, thou that takest away the sin of the world, let my name now be written in thy book of life?"

XVIII

LESSONS OF THE CLOSING YEAR

Text: I will make mention of the lovingkindnesses of Jehovah, and the praises of Jehovah, according to all that Jehovah hath bestowed on us.—Isa. 63 : 7.

THIS inspired writer laid out for himself an enormous task. How can any man fully mention the loving-kindness of the Lord? How can any man name all the subjects for praise to the Lord? Especially does the task become difficult, if not impossible, when we observe the measure in which the writer declares that he will perform these duties, "according to all that the Lord hath bestowed upon us." When you glance at the chapter you observe that it opens with a sublime description of Jehovah as a warrior with blood-stained garments, fresh from battle in Edom. There he had completely trodden down his foes; there he gloriously revealed his righteous indignation. This description seems almost like a separate poem added to this chapter. It has been called a lyrico-dramatic dialogue between the prophet as a bystander and Jehovah as a victorious warrior returning from battle in Idumæa. His garments are red with blood. In his movements he exhibits the indomitable strength of a resistless warrior. "Who is this

that cometh from Edom with dyed garments from Bozrah?" In answer to the question he responds, "I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." I have always felt that this language was sublime in the extreme. I can remember perfectly well how the reading of the opening of this chapter affected me as a boy. I did not, indeed, understand its significance, but I was charmed by its majesty, its stateliness, and its rare sublimity. In maturer years I have not changed my opinion of this remarkable description. With a reasonable familiarity with literature, ancient and modern, I know of no similar description that surpasses this in majesty; indeed, I think it would be difficult to name any passage in any literature that equals this passage in the particulars named.

With the verse which forms the text this morning, the subject of discussion changes. The verse is the beginning of an address which opens with thanksgiving to God for his loving-kindness, his tender compassion, and his gracious love to his people. This opening is followed by a historical survey of Israel's shortcomings, and of God's most gracious dealings with his people. There is a dominantly thankful and a greatly jubilant tone in my text this morning. That tone caught my ear; it stirred my soul; it led me to choose this text for the discourse of the morning. The return from Babylon is conceived of as near, even in almost immediate prospect. It gives occasion for great rejoicing. That

deliverance has colored all the thinking of the people of Israel ever since. The burst of joy occasioned by the return from Babylon has had only one parallel in Jewish history, namely, the deliverance from Egypt. Indeed, the return from Babylon is thought of by Jewish writers as the second exodus of the nation. It was like a blessed dream to the writer of the One hundred and twenty-sixth psalm; it was too good to be true. The gaiety and laughter of the songs of the joyous people echoed afar. The reaper came home bringing his sheaves with him and rejoicing with unspeakable joy. Seas, rivers, mountains, and forests are all called upon to voice the nation's joy. My text, "I will mention the lovingkindnesses of Jehovah," is the keynote to the song expressive of the nation's boundless joy.

COMMENSURATE THANKSGIVING.

Our lives also are full of tokens of God's loving-kindness; but we too often allow his mercies to pass by us without due appreciation. It is well on this last Sunday of the year that we should think on a large scale of God's goodness. In these days men think financially in millions; in these days men ought to think politically in continents. Our nation has become great. Its provincial days are over; they will never return. Our nation is a giant that has emerged from its cradle and all the anti-expansionists in the country can never put this giant back again into his infantile cradle. We touch the

world at more points to-day than ever before in our history. Our thanksgiving to God ought to be on a scale commensurate with our great place among the nations. It is impossible for us now to think of ourselves in our continental isolation; we must regard ourselves as in ubiquitous touch with all the nations and all the great movements of the world.

BETTERMENT ON THE CONGO.

We ought this morning to thank God for his loving-kindness because of the efforts now making toward the abatement of the satanic evils in the Congo region. These evils have been another of the open sores of the world. Doubtless some of the horrors may have been exaggerated, but after all possible deduction has been made, these horrors are simply hades. The king of the Belgians stands convicted of high crimes before the civilized world. The Congo Free State embraces a region of more than nine hundred thousand square miles; it is considerably larger than were the thirteen original States which formed our American Union. The Congo Association was originally organized under the patronage of King Leopold for the express purpose of suppressing the slave trade, but instead of doing so it has reduced the entire territory into a condition virtually indistinguishable from that of slavery. The whole world is aroused. Great Britain and the United States are joining hands for the suppression of these cruelties. When these two branches

of the Anglo-Saxon race join hands to suppress evil, no nation nor congeries of nations in the world, will dare oppose their union for this purpose. These two branches of the Anglo-Saxon people can rule the world, rule it for law and liberty, rule it for peace and prosperity, rule it for civilization and Christianity. The labored attempts of Cardinal Gibbons and Archbishop Farley to exculpate the king of the Belgians for his share in these atrocities will not meet with the approval of the American people. They have done themselves and they have done their church great injury in putting themselves alongside this monster of iniquity in the opening years of the twentieth century. Naturally they were disposed to favor him as much as possible, as he is a loyal son of the Roman Church, but they have injured their church in endeavoring to support him, and they have also injured themselves. They are either unintelligent or dishonest in their support of this monstrous king, this Ivan the Fourth of the twentieth century, "this murderer of millions," as he has been called by Mark Twain. Thank God this frightful evil will be destroyed; thank God this open sore will be healed!

SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE IN FRANCE.

We ought also to mention the loving-kindness of our God this morning because of the movement toward the separation of Church and State in France. This is a movement of mighty import.

The spirit of the Huguenots still lives. The awful cruelties of St. Bartholomew's Day and of the expulsion of the Huguenots on the revocation of the Edict of Nantes are not forgotten. The Huguenot expatriates and martyrs did not suffer in vain. Their heroic spirit still lives. A new day is dawning for France and for civil and religious liberty throughout the world. Spain, so long bound hand and foot, soul and body, with the fetters of illiteracy and superstition and priestcraft, is shaking off the terrible bondage of the centuries. The war between the United States and Spain was the greatest blessing ever enjoyed by the Spanish people. That war opened the eyes of all classes and conditions in Spain. Every country that is dominantly Roman in faith has been characterized by illiteracy and superstition. France is to realize Cavour's dream, the dream that stirred my soul in my college days, the dream which he translated into the phrase: "A free Church in a free State." That dream France will realize before many years shall pass. This is the only condition of safety for a republic. The assumption of the pope is that the Vatican is an *imperium in imperio*, that it is a power entirely above the State, supreme in all things. The pope continues to assert his rights as a temporal prince, forgetting that he was deprived of these rights years ago when Emmanuel rode in triumph through the streets of the Eternal City. As a temporal sovereign he insists on interfering with the affairs of France. No

government with the slightest self-respect will permit such outside interference, especially by a man who is himself a subject of a foreign king, and still more especially by a pope whose election was determined by Austria. Shall France permit a pope elected by Austria to dominate the affairs of the French Republic? No, never, while the spirit of patriotic Frenchmen breathes in that republic!

NONCONFORMIST DETERMINATION.

Permit me to say, in the third place, that the determination of the Nonconformists of Great Britain to secure an equitable Education Bill is also a cause for mentioning the loving-kindness of our God. Baptists have a special interest in the Education Bill. It was introduced in the Commons by a Baptist; it has been championed especially by Baptists. The foremost Nonconformist minister to-day, far and away the foremost, in Great Britain, is our Baptist brother, Rev. Dr. John Clifford. He certainly has no peer in any pulpit in Great Britain as a leader of the Nonconformist forces. Baptists have always been the stout advocates of civil and religious liberty. For this cause they dyed the snows on Alpine heights and fattened the Alpine valleys with their blood. To this holy cause they have given more martyrs than any other church. They have never persecuted, but have been persecuted by many churches for their loyal devotion to soul-liberty, to the sacred privilege of worshiping God according

to their own consciences and the teachings of the Bible. This bill, passed by a liberal majority in the House of Commons was, as you know, amended by the House of Lords. These amendments were so radical that they entirely changed the nature of the bill. The bill was then returned to the Commons, and it was rejected by the Commons by a vote of four hundred and sixteen to one hundred and seven. The decision of the House of Lords has brought great disappointment and hardship to the Nonconformists. It obliges them to continue the passive resistance movement until a way shall be found to compel the Lords to yield to the will of the people. Stirring days are coming in Great Britain. The House of Lords may itself be compelled to go out of business. It would not be at all surprising if, before many years pass, the House of Lords should be greatly modified as to its membership and as to its methods of legislation. The British people are aroused; they will not longer be dominated by the reactionary methods of the House of Lords. That House may have to fight in the near future for its own existence. I venture the prophecy that separation between Church and State will come comparatively soon in Great Britain. The Anglican Church is unjust in the extreme toward the Nonconformists of Great Britain. It taxes them for the support of schools in which are taught principles which they do not believe and must oppose.

The union of Church and State is a remnant of

medievalism. It must go; it will go. Disestablishment of the Anglican Church has already taken place in Ireland; disestablishment will take place soon in Wales; later disestablishment will take place in England. The Nonconformists are much more numerous than the Anglicans in Wales, and in England itself the Nonconformists are growing more rapidly than the Anglicans, notwithstanding their possession of vast church properties inherited by them from the Roman Church, and all the forms of social prestige and educational advantage which that church has so long enjoyed, and so selfishly monopolized. It is also certain that the old Presbyterian Kirk will be disestablished in Scotland. Brave Scotchmen will not forever submit to a national church supported by general taxation, while the people are supporting Baptist, Congregational, and Free Presbyterian churches by their voluntary offerings. The Free Church is utterly outstripping the Old Kirk, although it is supported by the revenues of the State. The principles of American liberty are permeating England, Ireland, Scotland, and the world. They are the principles of God's word and they will assuredly prevail.

ANNIHILATION OF SPACE.

We ought also to thank God this morning for the progress of science which is annihilating space, and which is contributing so greatly to the rapid spread of the glorious gospel of the blessed God. Modern

miracles abound. A new miracle greets us every morning. Indeed, these scientific miracles are so numerous and so marvelous that they no longer excite surprise. So many things already in the twentieth century have become facts which were in the closing years of the nineteenth century only fancies that another marvel is no longer marvelous. Men a thousand miles apart sit and converse almost as easily as if they were sitting in the same room. Sermons fly through the air to hospitals and to homes from many pulpits. Business conversations are now recorded by telautographs and similar instruments so that written contracts are actually made over telephones. Ships are warned of their approach to rocks by automatic instruments in the captain's cabin. The president goes on a trip to Panama and keeps in constant touch with the government at Washington during all the time of his absence. Marvels are no longer marvelous. It is easier than ever before to believe in prayer; it is easier than ever before to believe in all spiritual realities. If we can talk to our brother man a thousand miles away in perfect harmony with natural law, can we not talk to our Father in heaven, possibly also in perfect harmony with natural law? Before many years pass we may be able to demonstrate that prayer is as much in harmony with natural law as is the long-distance telephone. When a man tells me that I cannot talk to God, I have a right to ask: "How do you know, sir, that I cannot talk to

God?" I thank God that in these days science has become humble, modest, docile, and to a wonderful degree, religious. A great change has come over scientific thought and method during the last thirty to forty years; now many of the noblest scientists are humble worshipers at the pierced feet of Jesus Christ. Science has become, to a large degree, the handmaid of religion. We now see that the God of geology and of Genesis is one God, that truth is one, that truth cannot contradict itself, and that the God of truth is our Father, and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

GAIN IN LAW-ABIDINGNESS.

Observe also as a cause for thanksgiving to God that a better spirit is prevailing regarding the observance of law. This is a cause for most emphatic mention of the loving-kindness of our God. This nation of ours was fast becoming a byword among all civilized peoples because of our lynching and other forms of lawlessness. I have never blushed as an American in the presence of any foreigner as I have because of the lawlessness which at times has prevailed in this country. At times it seemed as if we were becoming a nation of savages; indeed, this term was applied to us by Buddhists in Japan and Hindus in India in their conversations with me on this subject. It has seemed as if Darkest Africa in this respect were light compared with parts of our beloved America. There is still room for enor-

mous improvement on this general subject, but a better sentiment is coming to prevail. America ought to be, America is, another name for opportunity, as Emerson has said. Christianity is the hope of the world; Christianity gives us the true socialism; Christianity levels a nation—levels it up, not down; Christianity lifts the downtrodden and gives all classes of men a fair chance. Racial caste is the foe of all nations where it is permitted to dominate. “The two great relics of barbarism,” as Wu Ting Fang said once in this pulpit, “are religious bigotry and racial prejudice.”

Racial prejudice brings forth its complete fruit in India. There is no great chance for a man in India so long as the present caste system prevails. If his father was a cobbler, he must be a cobbler; if his father was poor, he must be poor. A man can go down but he never can go up under the influence of that ancient and cruel caste system. There would have been no chance for a Garfield, no chance for a McKinley in India. We have been in danger of being under a similar control in our country. Give the black man a chance! That is all I ask for him. I ask for him no favors, but simply fair play. Are we so afraid of our Anglo-Saxon domination that we do not dare give a black man fair play? If so, we ought to be ashamed of ourselves. Let us get out of his way; let the poor fellow have a chance. That is all I ask. When he sins, punish him, but punish him according to law; and when a white man

sins, punish him according to law. Mob law is born of hades, and it leads to the place of its birth. The devil is the chief anarchist. Every man engaged in lynching is a murderer, and the sin of murder is on his soul. The governors of States are beginning to recognize that fact, and the great God will hold every lyncher responsible for murder at the great white throne. This is no longer a sectional sin; it is now a national crime. A mob is both brainless and conscienceless. Thank God a better spirit is coming to prevail.

GREAT REVIVALS.

I close by saying that the chief cause for our making mention of the loving-kindness of Jehovah this morning is that great revivals have been prevailing during the past year, and are likely to prevail in still larger measure during the opening year. This is the hope of the world. I am a believer in all moral reforms, but I must be especially a believer in *the* moral reform of the world—the dominance of the religion of Jesus Christ. I believe with Gladstone that we ought to make the commission of evil difficult and the doing of right easy; but back of all human law we want men and women to be made new creatures in Christ Jesus. That transformation is the hope of the race. Then lynching will go; then caste prejudice will go. You may see in India to-day a high-caste Brahmin sitting side by side in a mission school with a pariah, both of

them washed in the precious blood of Jesus Christ, both new creatures in Christ Jesus, and both brothers in service and love. All forms of progress are secondary to revivals of pure and undefiled religion. This blessing includes all other desirable things. Looking back over the closing year we are filled with thanksgiving to God for the great meetings held by Doctor Torrey, in Ottawa, in Toronto, in Philadelphia, in Atlanta, and in other cities of Canada and of the United States. We give thanksgiving to God for the leadership of Doctor Chapman in great revivals. This movement has been the birth of a new day in these United States. We give thanks to God for the work in Boston, in Portland, and elsewhere of Gipsy Smith. He is a man of marvelous power; his spirit is sweet; his words are gracious; and his soul is aglow with love to God and to the souls of men. The old gospel has not lost its power; thank God it never will lose its power until this sinful world is brought in sweet obedience to the feet of Jesus Christ. Here, almost at the close of thirty-seven years of my pastorate I stand under the cross and preach the old gospel with greater faith in its efficacy and resistless power than ever before in my ministry. We shall soon step with God over into the new year. We take the hand of Jesus Christ; we keep step to the music of his name. We shall not all see the close of the new year. Some of us beginning the year with God here shall end the year with God there. If spared our song on earth shall

be of his loving-kindness ; if translated, our song in heaven, with sweeter notes and higher joy, shall still be of his loving-kindness which is without beginning or ending in duration, and without measure in degree.

XIX

GOD'S GUIDANCE FOR THE NEW YEAR

Text: Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.—Isa. 41 : 10.

AS you know, it has been my custom for some years on the first Sunday of the New Year to give a motto-text for the year. Sometimes this text has been an exhortation from God; sometimes it has been a declaration of purpose on our part toward God; and sometimes it has been a blessed promise from God's word for our guidance and inspiration during the year. This year the text selected is one of the great promises of God. It seemed well that the motto-text should be printed on the last page of the calendar for to-day; if you will preserve the calendars which are in the pews you will have constantly before you a reminder of the text chosen as the motto for the year 1907. If you look at the thirteenth verse of this same chapter you will find that the thought of the text, as related to God's grasp of our right hand, is somewhat amplified and is beautifully emphasized. This text is part of a most precious series of promises; this series is a cluster of ripe grapes from Eshcol. The text is a

treasure-house of precious truth; it is sweet honey exuding from the honeycomb. If we do nothing more than commit this text to memory and carry it with us through the year we shall have constant guidance and divine inspiration amid the trials which the year is certain to bring.

THE DIVINE PRESENCE.

I call your attention, in the first place, to the promise of the *divine presence* given us in this text, "Fear thou not, for *I* am with thee." Fear is not an uncommon ailment with God's children. We stand hesitating on the border-line of the new year. We know not what it has in store for us. We know, indeed, that God does not promise that his people shall not have trials, but he does promise that his presence and his support will be constantly given to his people in all their trials. He also gives them assurance of victory over the trial. He does not promise that they shall not go into the fiercely heated furnace, but he does promise that he will go into that furnace with them, and that they shall come out of its fiercest flames without the smell of fire on their garments.

Spiritual conflicts often accompany temporal trials. Why does God afflict his people? Why do they suffer often apparently more than do those who are not God's people? Why does he chasten those whom he loves? Thus it comes to pass that opposing principles sometimes strive for the mastery in

the hearts of God's true children. Each man is, in a sense, two men; the old life and the new life struggle within us for the mastery. In every man there is a Mr. Hyde; in every man there is also a Doctor Jekyll. But in every trial we may be absolutely sure of the presence of God to cheer and to support us. This assurance is quite sufficient to dispel our fears, to scatter our doubts, and to inspire our hearts. All the perfections of God's character are pledged to our protection. We are under the watchfulness of his eye; we share in the powerfulness of his arm; we have a place in the pity of his heart. Sweet are the words of the One hundred and third psalm and the thirteenth verse: "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." Here the fatherly, the paternal, side of God's character is beautifully illustrated. There is, however, a passage of Scripture which is even more tender; it is found in Isaiah, the sixty-seventh chapter and the thirteenth verse: "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you." No one but God can comfort like a mother. Fathers, however gentle and loving they intend to be and really are, are cold and awkward compared to mothers. Mothers have secrets for comforting their children which fathers never can learn. Many of us can remember, although the years since that time are rapidly multiplying, the music of the mother's voice and the magic touch of her hand upon our head or our shoulder; no other influence could so soothe a tired

and fretful boy's spirits. There will come times even now when the words of the laureate will press upon our souls:

Oh, for the touch of a vanished hand,
And the sound of a voice that is still!

My thoughts go up this morning from earthly fathers and mothers to God. God is both father and mother to his children. I rejoice that in these later years I have come into a larger and tenderer relationship to God. I have learned to think of God as possessing the gentleness of a mother conjoined with the omnipotence of God. He gives a father's pity; and he gives a mother's comfort. The chief element in this pity and comfort, according to the part of my text now in our thought, is the assurance of his presence—"I am with thee." We are reminded of the divine promise as given in the Great Commission: "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Surely he will be with us even unto the end of the year, when he is to be with us to the end of all the years.

The Old Testament abounds with illustrations of God's promises to abide with his people. Look at Jacob on his stony pillow. Night gathers about him. He is weary, he is sinful, he is sad. He sleeps; he dreams. The rough stones which he had seen in the ledges of rock about him just before he closed his eyes in slumber—stones which to this day are arranged like steps in a stairway—are still in

his thought as he dreams. In the visions of the night they form a vast stairway; the messengers of God ascend and descend on this heavenly ladder. God speaks to the houseless wanderer. The place becomes a Bethel, the very gate of heaven. Listen, "Behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest." This assurance could not fail to fill his troubled heart with peace and to inspire his anxious thought with hope. Who may be the successor of Moses? What hands shall take up the burden which he has laid down? It almost seems as if all the plans of God for Israel must be defeated. There was but one Moses in the world. No man could fill his great place. But God will find a brave man who will nobly fill a great place of his own. There stands Joshua. How dare he assume the work? But above him stands God. God speaks to Joshua, saying: "Be strong and of a good courage. As I was with Moses, so will I be with thee; I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee; there shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life."

These are most wonderful words. Any man can do exploits when he has such a promise as God gave Joshua for his encouragement. Any man can stand when the Rock of Ages is behind him; any man can follow when God leads in the way. Who may undertake to succeed David? See Solomon; well may he be overwhelmed with the sense of his great responsibility; but God speaks: "I will be

with thee, and build thee a sure house." So God was with Paul and Silas in the old jail at Philippi; and because of the consciousness of God's presence they made that old jail vocal with their songs of praise to God. So God has been with his people in all the ages since. Think of the glorious army of martyrs—the Latimers, the Hoopers, the Riddleys! Think of those who went with weary feet through the glens, or climbed the rugged hills of Scotland—Donald Cargill, James Renwick, and other brave, heroic, and immortal men! From the horrors of the Grass Market noble souls went up to glory and to God. Every land has had its martyrs for Jesus; every land has had its baptism of blood. Think of our Baptist brethren who suffered in America for truth—Obadiah Holmes, John Clark, John Crandall, and many others. Each one realized the fulfilment of God's precious promises: "I am with thee; my presence shall go with thee; I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

REALITY OF THE DIVINE RELATIONSHIP.

I beg you to notice, in the second place, another ground of comfort in this sweet motto-text; the first is the assurance of the divine presence; the second is the reality of the *divine relationship*. You catch the thought as you read the text: "For I am thy God." The reality of divine relationship is here emphasized. Notice the singular form of the pronouns, *I am thy God.*" God is your God, and

he is my God; he is all yours, and he is all mine. God is, in a peculiar sense, the God of his people. Like others, they are created by his power; like others, they share in the blessings of his providence, for the sun shines alike upon the good and upon the evil, upon the just and the unjust. But, unlike others, true believers are born again; all true believers are twice born. Born of the flesh they are fleshly; born of the spirit they are spiritual. Only true believers can really say, "Our Father, who art in heaven." All men may repeat the words, and in a vague sense the words belong to all men; but in their fulness and tenderness of meaning they belong only to those who have the adoption of sons. Only they who have come into God's family by adoption and by regeneration can really say, "Abba, Father." God has a great many prodigal sons; in a sense they are his sons although they are prodigals. But while men are with the swine in the far country, they cannot, except in a limited, dwarfed, and truncated sense, say "Abba, Father." Not until they have come back home to the Father's feet and the Father's heart can they really say "Our Father."

All true Christians have entered into a new relationship with God. Those who are truly regenerated stand as closely related to God in their spiritual nature as they stand related to their earthly father in their physical nature. Nothing is more certain than that the relationship to the Almighty is as

close and personal as is the relationship to the earthly father on the human side. We are distinctly taught by the Apostle Peter that we are "partakers of the divine nature." In Heb. 12 : 10, we have the words: "That we might be partakers of his holiness." As a man grows older and looks into the mirror he sees there in the reflection of his own face his own father and sees his mother. He sees parts of his mother's face and also parts of his father's face and head. A man is the child of both his parents. As a man grows older he can the more fully see in himself the likeness to his parents. So when a man looks up he ought to see in himself as a child of God the likeness of God, who is his second Father, his spiritual Father, his divine Father, as truly as he sees the likeness to his earthly father and mother. If we are truly children of God we are related to God by the second birth, by regeneration, as truly as we are related to our earthly parents by natural generation. Oh, how sweet is this personal relationship—"I am thy God." It is blessed to be able to say, "The Lord is my shepherd." It would have been a wonderful thing if the psalmist had said only that "the Lord is a *shepherd*"; but he said vastly more. He said: "The Lord is my shepherd." He brought the Lord thus down to the side of men. I walk along the street to a magnificent mansion and I say: "This is a magnificent home," and I look upon it with admiration. How different my relation to it would be if I could say: "This is *my* home."

I look up to God and I say: "This is *my* God." I am warranted in so saying, as I read this text, because God says, "For I am thy God."

Make him thy God during 1907. Remember how Longfellow, in his "Evangeline," speaks of the shuddering mimosa. Yonder it is on the plain; its heart is open; it listens; and now comes the horseman thundering over the plain. His hoof-beats the shuddering flower hears and feels. Watch it; it trembles. Its leaves begin to close over its trembling heart, fearing what those hoof-beats may portend. Our hearts to-day, in spite of ourselves, are shuddering flowers; and as we hear the hoof-beats of God's providence over the plain we tremble, we shrink, we fear; but above all other sounds may we to-day hear God say: "Fear not, I am with thee, I am thy God."

THE DIVINE ACHIEVEMENTS.

Thus far in my analysis of the text I have given you two grounds of comfort: First, the assurance of the divine presence; secondly, the reality of the divine relationship. In the third place, let me speak of the *divine achievements*. Perhaps, instead of "I will strengthen thee," the translation should be, "I have strengthened thee." The two other verbs also may be in the past tense, but they may also be regarded as prophetic of future good. God is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever; with him there is no variableness nor shadow of turning. The past

and the future blend in this text in an eternal present. God's past achievements give assurance of future triumphs. God will go hand in hand with us through this new year. Times of trial are sure to come, but God will be present with his aid. Are you destitute of friends? God will be a friend who sticketh closer than a brother. Are you conscious of sin? He will save to the uttermost all who come to him through Jesus Christ. Are you lacking in wisdom? Then ask of God and he will give wisdom liberally and upbraid not. Are you weak and wavering? Then he will encourage you with his gracious promise and uphold you with his right hand. Does the future seem to us forbidding? Remember God's past achievements. Let the past deliverances give us hope for future temptations. Let our yesterdays be encouragements for our to-morrows. Do not attempt to load to-morrow's burdens on to-day's strength. No man, however godly, has strength enough to-day for to-morrow's burdens added to those of to-day. Sufficient for the day is the burden thereof. Do not go out into the new year in a spirit of fear and distrust. God graciously hides the future from our view. This fact is an evidence of his wisdom and love. If we knew to-day that great joy or sorrow were coming to-morrow we would be unfitted for the duties of to-day. Let us remember the blessed promise, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be."

Many of God's dear children fear the article of

death; they spend part of their lives in bondage because of their fear of death. This is a foolish fear. Perhaps we have talked too much about preparation for death. We ought to talk more of preparation for life. He who is prepared by a living and personal faith in Christ rightly to live is prepared always to die. We ought not to pray to be saved from sudden death, as some of the prayer-books teach us to pray. That prayer is based on a gross superstition—the superstition that extreme unction, or some other priestly rite must be administered before we are prepared to die. This belief is the crass ignorance of medieval superstition. Let us live Christly lives and we shall assuredly die victorious deaths. If God gives us living grace, while he preserves us in life, he certainly will not deny us dying grace when the dying hour comes.

I know nothing sweeter than the words of my text, especially when joined to the words of the thirteenth verse, "For the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee." This reference to the right hand is a Hebrew method of saying that God's hand was faithful, trustworthy, reliable.

He was a wise boy who said, when walking with his father on a slippery street and whose father had said to him, "Take hold of my hand," "Father, I would rather that you would take hold of my hand; your hand is so strong that you can hold mine very tight." Let us to-day put our hand in God's hand.

His hand upholds the universe; nothing is beyond its power, its tenderness, and gentleness. Will you now take God for your Saviour, your Lord and Master during the new year? Will you, here and now, put your weak hand in his fatherly and powerful hand for this year and for all the future of your life?

I ask each one now to lift up the hand and place it in God's hand. He will uphold you, he will strengthen you, yea, he will cause you to stand. Come bright or dark days, days of storm or calm, thus upheld by God we shall overcome every trial and win every victory. I put my hand now in God's hand for 1907. O Father in heaven, let me feel thy loving clasp to-day. Let me go out with thee into the new year. Hold me, Father, with thy powerful hand until every trial is over, until faith gives place to sight, time to eternity, and earth with its trials to heaven with boundless joy, unbroken peace, and ineffable bliss!

XX

THE EMPTY TOMB OF JESUS

Text: Come, see the place where the Lord lay.—Matt. 28 : 6.

WITH garlands and hosannas we respond to the "All hail" of the risen and victorious Christ. We see him marching forth in triumph with the keys of death and hades hanging from his girdle. Once more we chant the triumphant words of the Apostle Paul, in his great argument for Christ's resurrection: "Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Easter is the most joyful festival of the Christian Church. We regret the heathen associations of the name Easter, but the name must remain, and we can fill it with sublime thoughts of Christ's glorious victory. Without doubt the name is derived from that of the Teutonic goddess of Spring, Ostera, or Eostre, this festival occurring about the time of the year that Easter is celebrated. Both in the churches of the East and the West, profound significance was seen in the Easter commemoration as suggesting the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world.

Christ was the true Paschal Lamb, slain on the very day observed by the Jews in celebration of their Passover. Easter was, therefore, often called by the French, the Pâques; the Dutch, Paschen; the Danes, Paaske; and the Swedes, Pask. The Apostle Paul calls Christ "our Pasch."

We can all sympathize with the practice of the Russian Church, whose members on Easter greet one another with the jubilant salutation: "The Lord is risen"; and those addressed make the joyful response: "He is truly risen." The kiss of holy brotherhood seals this new bond of Christian faith and love. It is not surprising that in the early history of the church many Christians, and even pagans, on the night preceding Easter, bore into the churches waving lights, and there watched for the dawn of the resurrection morning. It is not surprising that cities were splendidly illuminated, and the vicinity of the churches was transfigured into a sea of fire. Neither is it surprising that many in the early church expected that on Easter night Christ would come again, receiving his people unto himself and then ascending his throne to pass judgment on his foes.

A LITERAL TOMB.

We cannot actually accept the invitation of the angel and visit the place where the Lord lay. The hand of time, and the hands alike of superstition and infidelity have made it impossible for us to

know, with exactness, the place of Christ's sepulcher. We can, however, in spirit visit that tomb to-day and rejoice in the great lessons which it so emphatically teaches. As we stand beside this tomb we are reminded that Jesus Christ was literally dead. No child of humanity was ever more truly dead than was Jesus Christ, the Lord of life and the King of Glory. There is absolutely no room for doubt on this point. We know that a Mosaic statute forbade that the corpses of criminals should remain unburied after sunset. As the day of Christ's crucifixion was nearing its close, permission was begged of Pilate to have the legs of the convicts broken that thus their death should be hastened, and their burial completed before sunset. Pilate granted this request. Soldiers, therefore, broke the legs of the robbers crucified with Jesus. When they came to him, however, they found that he was already dead. These soldiers were ignorant of the fact that a Scripture fifteen hundred years old had said: "A bone of him shall not be broken." The speedy death of Christ caused great surprise to friends and foes alike. We recognize the influence of the sufferings which he had endured in hastening his death; but his death came more quickly than we could have expected, even after making due allowance for his sorrowful Passover, his sleepless night, his shameful arrest, the traitor's kiss, and the bloody sweat. It seems well-nigh certain that Doctor Stroud is entirely correct in his instructive treatise "On the Physical Cause of

the Death of Christ." He maintains, by numerous and apparently conclusive arguments, that Christ's death was not due merely to his crucifixion, but that all its symptoms show that there was a literal rupture of the walls of the heart. In the strictest physiological, as well as in the deepest moral sense, Christ died of a broken heart. This conclusion is in harmony with ancient prophecy, as well as with modern medical science.

The soldiers, however, are determined to make assurance doubly sure; they therefore rudely thrust a great spear into his side, and forthwith there flowed blood and water. The beloved John years afterward said: "This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood." We thus have a striking fulfilment of the prophecy of Zechariah, regarding the fountain that was opened to the house of David for sin and uncleanness. With the utmost literalness, as well as with the tenderest spirituality, we can sing with Toplady:

Rock of ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee;
Let the water and the blood,
From thy riven side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,
Cleanse me from its guilt and power.

We are thus absolutely certain that Jesus died; that his was not a case of syncope. The words of the Apostle Paul are literally true when he says:

“Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.” His death was an expiatory offering on account of our sins. He did not die merely as a martyr, but as a vicarious sacrifice. This truth the Apostle Paul taught as one of the great and fundamental truths on which the church at Corinth, and the church throughout the world has been founded. No doctrine is more certain and significant than that Jesus Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures. His burial was attended by every circumstance of affection and honor. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, both of whom were members of the Sanhedrin, assisted in removing his body from the cross and preparing it for burial. We can well imagine that woman’s tender hand assisted in this sacred service. There is no bier on which the body may be borne, but the hands of love gently bear it to the new tomb awaiting its reception. Let us lay the regal head, with those closed eyes, on the breast of the beloved John as the body is carried to its temporary tomb. In silence and sorrow it is laid on its clean, cold, rocky bed; the loving disciples reverently withdraw and the great stone is rolled to the mouth of the sepulcher. Pilate furnished the guard, and these soldiers stretched a cord across the great stone and stamped the ends, where they were fastened, with the imperial seal of the great Cæsar. Was there ever so solemn a burial as this? There lies the Lord of life and glory, motionless, shrouded, entombed, while the Roman sentries, spear in hand,

march to and fro before the tomb, preserving inviolate the seal of the mighty Cæsar.

A GARDEN TOMB.

Having accepted the invitation of the angel, and having come to the place where the Lord lay, we discover that the tomb is in a garden. This is a strange place in which to find a tomb; men do not usually adorn gardens with tombs. We are, however, distinctly informed that "in the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in that garden a sepulcher." In that sepulcher the sacred body of the holy Saviour was laid. We are silent with amazement as we reflect upon the environment of this tomb. There do not seem to have been other tombs in this garden; this tomb alone is observable. We have here a strange mingling of opposites; gardens stand for life, for beauty; but tombs for corruption, decay, and death. Beautiful lessons, however, are taught by this commingling of apparent opposites. Every garden has its grave; this is true of the garden of the church, of the home, and of the heart. Every path in life, if pursued sufficiently long, leads us to a tomb. This is the sad side of life; this fact introduces the element of solemnity, and sometimes of tragedy, into every home and heart.

There is, however, another side to this sad thought: while it is true that in every garden there is a tomb, it is also true that around every

tomb there may be a garden. This thought is inexpressibly sweet. The tomb of every true believer is in the garden of faith, of hope, of light, of love, of life. Around that tomb flowers of indescribable fragrance and unspeakable beauty bloom. Around that tomb birds of paradise sing their sweetest song, and angels of heaven sit, filling the tomb and the garden with the splendor of their presence, and making the garden of the tomb prophetic of the paradise of God. Upon the stone rolled to the mouth of the sepulcher of every believer, we may engrave the triumphant words of the Apostle Paul: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." The grave is now beautiful because in it once lay Jesus Christ. He has robbed it of its terrors! He has sweetened it with the perfumes of paradise; he has illumined it with the light of heaven. Standing beside the grave we can now hear the words of the voice from heaven, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord." Christ's sepulcher was in a human garden, and that sepulcher transformed that garden into God's acre.

A COSTLY TOMB.

It is observable, as we stand beside this tomb, that it was a beautiful and costly tomb. This fact greatly surprises us when we remember that Jesus said, with infinite sadness: "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of

man hath not where to lay his head." How came it to pass that this houseless, homeless, and often friendless man was buried in a costly tomb? The question is full of interest, and its answer abounds in instruction. Seven hundred years before his death, Isaiah, the Evangelical Prophet, foretold that death and this burial. His words are profoundly significant:

He made his grave with the wicked,
And with the rich in his death.

Nothing could be more unlikely than that this ancient prophecy could be fulfilled. Jesus died on the cross as a felon. At the time of his death Judea was a Roman province. We would expect that the Roman criminal code would prevail, and that his body would remain on the cross until it was consumed by ravenous creatures, or wasted by decomposition. If this custom had prevailed the body of Jesus would never have received burial. Observe how marvelously the ancient prophecy came to be fulfilled. Moses ordained that the corpses of criminals should be buried on the day of their execution; this Mosaic requirement the Roman government permitted to prevail in the case of Jesus. It is to be observed, also, that the Jews, in this special case, would naturally desire that the body of Jesus should receive a shameful burial. But the day after the crucifixion was the Jewish sabbath, and this particular sabbath was the great Passover sabbath, one of the most

sacred days of the Hebrew year. It thus came to pass that the Jews desired to hasten the ignominious burial before sunset, because at that hour their sabbath began. Christ's death did not take place until three o'clock in the afternoon; the time, therefore, was extremely limited before the hour of sunset. We see on what a minute pivot the fulfilment of prophecy, uttered hundreds of years before, was delicately balanced. When the soldiers came to hasten the death of Jesus by breaking his legs, as we have already seen, they found that Jesus was even then dead. The further proof of his death was found by the thrust of the spear, and the flowing forth of blood and water. Jesus is, therefore, actually dead. Shall he not now be placed in a malefactor's grave? This result seemed almost inevitable. Doubtless his enemies were even then preparing to take down his body and to bury it with the robbers with whom he had been crucified. This burial would have utterly contradicted the ancient prophecy of Isaiah. Then came the visit of Joseph and Nicodemus; then was granted their request by Pilate; then came the tender burial of Jesus by his loving friends, who placed him in Joseph's new and costly tomb.

Suppose that Joseph had not made this request of Pilate; suppose that Pilate had not granted this request of Joseph; suppose that either the request or the consent of Pilate had been a few minutes later. The ancient prophecy would not have been fulfilled, and Jesus would have been buried in the grave of a

criminal. How marvelous are these events in the ordering of God's providence! It thus came to pass that God's crucified and beloved Son, notwithstanding the designs of his foes, received most honorable burial. Indeed, his honors began the moment he died, the sacrifice for human sin. If he is to be buried, honorable members of the Sanhedrin shall be among his bearers; if he is to be buried, costly spices will enwrap him with his shroud; if he is to be buried, he will be laid in the costly tomb of the honorable Joseph. When he bowed his head in death he paid the last debt due to the justice of God, as the vicarious sacrifice for human guilt. Immediately his honors began and continued until he lay in august repose in his superb tomb. He, who was the Rock of Ages, lay in the tomb of rock until he came forth in triumph in his resurrection. In the wonderful description given by the Apostle Paul, in the second chapter of Philippians, of the humiliation of Christ, we follow that humiliation from Christ's conscious equality with God, as it comes down step by step, until we see Christ obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. With that death Christ's humiliation reached its lowest point. Immediately his glorious ascent began. We follow him upward as God highly exalted him, until we see him enthroned with the name that is above every name, and at that name all things in heaven and earth and under the earth bow in perfect submission. Fitting, then, was it that Christ's tomb should be beautiful and costly.

AN ORDERLY TOMB.

We observe that the grave-clothes with which Joseph and Nicodemus had swathed the body were carefully wrapped up and not lying in a disorderly heap. The napkin, which Mary herself may have helped to bind around the thorn-marked brow, was folded in a place by itself. Who folded these cerements of the tomb? Was this a work of love by the hands of angels? It is more likely that the hands of Jesus himself arranged these garments. Rising in glory and majesty he would not leave the tomb in disorder. If the tomb had been rifled by his foes the grave-clothes would not have been carefully adjusted by them in their necessary haste. If his friends had carried away the body to be buried elsewhere they would have required the grave-clothes for that burial. It is certain that Christ slept until the appointed hour dawned and then rose in divine dignity and sublime majesty, and went forth as conqueror of death and the grave. He was never again to need the garments of the dead. With the utmost deliberation he left the tomb. The effect of this orderly grave on the beloved John was most marked: "He saw and believed." What did he believe? Simply that the tomb was empty? That fact was sufficiently obvious; it needed no additional certification. He believed that Jesus was risen from the dead. His nature, quieter and deeper than that of the Apostle Peter, the more readily laid hold of this sublime

truth. While Peter, in his impulsiveness, was the first to enter the tomb, John, in his thoughtfulness, was the first to believe in the resurrection. He was really the first person in the whole world fully to believe in this glorious truth. His faith was stronger than that of Peter, and his loving nature enabled him to lay hold of this sublime truth with the utmost tenacity and simplicity of faith. We too may, with the Apostle John, behold this orderly tomb, and see and believe.

AN EMPTY TOMB.

It is especially to be emphasized that it is an empty tomb. We saw the Roman soldiers marching with their spears to and fro to preserve Cæsar's seal. The solemn hours pass; perhaps the morning is now dawning. Congress recently issued a special edition of Thomas Jefferson's Bible. It will be remembered that he made selections from the Bible, omitting all that he deemed supernatural; he confines himself simply to the moral teaching of Jesus. His Bible ends with the words: "There laid they Jesus and rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulcher, and departed."

The Bible of the evangelists, however, does not end the history of Jesus Christ with those words. We shall see that the stone has been rolled away forever, that his tomb is empty, and that he is to-day a living Saviour, triumphant at the right hand of God, and ruler over millions of joyous and trustful men

and women. Behold an angel of the Lord, with appearance like lightning and raiment white as snow, rolls away the stone and seats himself thereon. Cæsar's seal is broken; the Roman guard stands aghast; their spears are ready to drop from their nerveless hands. No mortal actually saw Christ in the act of rising; God performs his divinest things in silence and beyond the sight of men. Soon the women approach the tomb; they learn from the angels that Jesus is not there but is risen, and they hear the angelic invitation: "Come, see the place where the Lord lay." We have accepted that invitation, we have studied some of the characteristics of that tomb; now we are especially rejoiced to find that it is empty. We can say with Phillips Brooks:

Tomb, thou shalt not hold Him longer;
Death is strong, but life is stronger;
Stronger than the dark, the light;
Stronger than the wrong, the right;
Faith and hope triumphant say
Christ will rise on Easter Day.

In the empty grave of Jesus, the corner-stone of the Christian church is laid. The resurrection of Jesus, changing his figure, is the keystone of the arch of divine revelation. This empty grave gives us assurance that Christ's work of redemption was completed. Not alone on Pilate's cross, but in Joseph's tomb did that work receive its divine certification, as to its completion and acceptance. When Jesus Christ came forth in triumph from the grave,

angels, men, and devils, were taught that his work was finished, and that his triumph was complete. He had himself staked all on his resurrection. He had affirmed that he had power to lay down his life and to take it again. In the most solemn manner did his resurrection ratify that affirmation, and fulfil this prophecy. It gives uniqueness to the Christian religion. There are founders of other religions—Confucius, Zoroaster, Mohammed—these founders all died, but did ever one of them rise from the dead? Christianity stands alone in that respect among the religions of the race. The resurrection is the absolutely unique fact of Christianity; the resurrection is the majestic assurance of the reality of our Christian faith and hope. The resurrection involved the death, the death implied the life, and the life necessitated the birth. It thus comes to pass that Joseph's empty tomb is in unique harmony with Bethlehem's holy manger.

The resurrection of Christ assures us that we now have a living Saviour; the permanently dead Saviour is unwelcome in art and utterly undesirable and untruthful in religion. The Roman Church has erred in exalting the dead Christ at the expense of the living Christ. We desire no *Pieta*, no statue of the dead Christ with the Virgin, or sorrowing women, or angels. We prefer to hear the angels say: "He is not here, for he is risen." We need the atoning work of Christ's historic death; but we need, also, the sanctifying influence of Christ's risen and glori-

fied life. We need more than a divine statue; we must have the inspiration of a risen, exalted, and living Christ as Friend and Saviour. Ours is not the church of the Entombment; ours is the church of the Resurrection; ours is not the church alone of the Atoning Death; ours is also the church of the Heavenly Life. To-day we hail the divine Man, who marches forth in exultant might as the first-born from the dead; to-day we utter no *Miserere* for an embalmed Galilean, but we sing a *Te Deum* for the risen, enthroned, and crowned Immanuel.

We also have a personal interest in this glorious resurrection. We see that the apostles made the resurrection one of the important themes of their preaching, the Apostle Paul declaring that "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain." The resurrection is the crowning miracle of Christianity to-day. If this event be true, then all other facts in Christ's life are credible, for no fact can be greater than his resurrection from the dead. In that resurrection we have a prophecy of our own victory over death and the grave. Death has been the grim and inexorable tyrant, whom tears never softened and wealth never bribed. Only two of the many millions of humanity in the olden time passed into the spirit world without tasting death. But in the case both of Enoch and Elijah death was not really mastered, because they were withdrawn from the conflict before they grappled with this fierce foe. Christ alone entered

the dreary prison-house of death's domain and came forth in triumph leading death captive in his train. When he arose on that first Easter morning he bade adieu to the grave forevermore. Empty as was Joseph's tomb, so empty on some glad Easter morning shall be the tombs of the world. We cannot fully now ask with the Apostle Paul: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" But that victory, in all its blessed fulness, awaits us, when the great day of resurrection shall come. Then shall we be able to say, joining with the triumphal songs of saints and seraphs, angels and archangels: "Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."



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